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A Narrative Inquiry into Mothering & Child Caregiving

by

Mary Lynne Matheson ©

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in
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to tell the stories of three women who remained home with their own preschool children and who, at the same time, provided paid child care in the private or unregulated sector. Narrative inquiry is used to provide in-depth understanding of these women's experiences by presenting their stories of combining mothering and child caregiving.

A textile metaphor is used to identify threads in these women's stories. The metaphorical threads and cloths which represent each woman's mothering and caregiving are described and portrayed visually in an attempt to make abstract concepts more grounded. The ways in which the researcher sees each woman weaving together the threads of mothering and caregiving are examined. Also discussed are relational threads that represent friendships, children, and money earned from caregiving. Potential stressors which occur in each woman's experience as a mother and "babysitter" are identified.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

In Canadian society, where it is challenging for a family to survive on a single income, some mothers are attempting to contribute financially to their household and to stay at home with their children at the same time. Providing child care for other people's children along with caring for their own children in their homes is a way that mothers can remain at home and earn money. While at first glance, this might seem to be an ideal solution and permit mothers to have the best of both worlds, it has been suggested that caring for other's children in the home can actually interfere with focusing on one's own children. Such an arrangement can put the mother in the position of facilitating a practice in which she does not believe (Innes & Innes, 1984; Nelson, 1994).

> Not only do they [mothers who remain at home with their children and provide paid child care] attempt to offer the kind of care they think is impossible from anyone but a mother but by offering this service, they facilitate women in the workplace even though they believe women should stay home and look after their children. (Glenn, Chang, & Forcie, 1994, p. 192).

Combining the work of mother and child caregiver might seem to compromise the traditional ideology of mothering because this activity does not always permit the mother to attend to her own children in the ways she might have planned in choosing to remain at home with them (Nelson, 1990).

In fact, it has been said that "family child care creates diverted mothering" (Glenn, Chang, & Forcie, 1994, p. 72) which in turn means that a mother might not have the time and energy to focus on her own children.

The work of family day care providers takes place in the home, in the private domain, and therefore seems to be invisible or not recognized as legitimate work. Because providing family day care is often seen as an extension of the mothering role, it is marginalized in society to an even greater extent (Glenn, Chang & Forcie, 1994). Efforts have been made in the past decade to bring family day care "out of the shadows and into the limelight" (Kontos,1992) through research. Much of the research on family day care has focused on the regulated sector where providers are licensed or registered with a private or government family day home agency. Less research has been conducted in the unregulated sector with women who provide care for other people's children in their own homes as independent caregivers. Furthermore, there are no comprehensive lists or data bases of unregulated home care providers according to Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF, 1997). The inability of researchers to easily identify unregulated providers seems to be a factor that contributes to the lack of information available about the women who provide family day care in the unregulated or private sector--"the babysitters".

Further research is warranted in order to understand who these women are, what their thoughts and feelings about mothering are, and how they experience their work as caregivers and mothers. Research focused on these women will be of assistance to those individuals considering combining mothering and child caregiving. Such stories will also acknowledge and validate those currently living in these spaces. The process of allowing time for the women involved in this research to tell their stories is one that is affirming for them. Recognizing what these mothers do as valid and acknowledging their stories as worth listening to is a way to support these women and their work. It can provide a vehicle for these women, as well as for others, to begin to contemplate the issues, dynamics and complexities of women's work as mothers and family day care providers. It can encourage discussion and contemplation of marginalized, taken-for-granted work and contributes to the visibility of mothering and caregiving.

Therefore, in this research I will be working with three women to hear their stories of staying at home to be with their own children while providing paid child care.

Narrative Beginnings

I believe that an important place to begin the description of my research project is with my own experiences as a woman struggling to combine the work of being a mother with my responsibilities at home, at work and at school. The challenges I experience as a mother lead me to be interested in mothering and my work as an instructor in a college early childhood program sparks my interest in caregiving. Articulating my thoughts and feelings can, perhaps, help others to understand why this research related to mothering and caregiving is of such importance to me. That my experience might be the experience of someone else makes it a vital element in what I write.

It is also important for me to discuss the "conceptual baggage" I carry related to mothering and caregiving so that my biases and limitations are made clear to the reader (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). My assumptions, beliefs and uncertainties had an impact not only on my choice of research topic but also on how I processed and interpreted information I received and the stories I was told. "To be aware of the structure of my own experience may provide me with clues for orienting myself to the phenomenon..." (van Manen, 1984, p. 52). I used my journal to record the evolution of my thoughts and feelings during this research to help me stay alert to my biases but I also believe that it is important to share my own motherhood story with the reader. That is why my personal orientation to this research is described at the beginning of this thesis. Bateson (1989) suggests that self knowledge is empowering. It is with these words in mind that I begin with my story, knowing that it was my views and uncertainty about what constitutes "good mothering" which lead me to undertake the research for this thesis.

I recall wanting to be a good mother long before I had children of my own. My vision of a good mother was someone who was nurturing and loving, had lots of time for her children, was involved in their activities and listened to them. Although my husband said that he was ready for children early in our marriage, I was not. I thought I had to postpone the decision to be a mother until I felt that I had acquired enough knowledge about being a parent. I also felt that I needed some tools to help me raise my children in ways that were different from what I saw and heard happening all around me.

I remember myself as a child sometimes feeling unheard and helpless as I obeyed the adults in my life: parents, teachers and relatives. I knew that I wanted to parent differently and sought information that could help me relate to children in ways that were less authoritarian. I spent time reading and attending courses until I felt that I had sufficient knowledge to begin motherhood. However, just when I thought I was ready, my husband and I went on a vacation that caused me to delay my decision to become a mother temporarily.

This vacation was taken with friends who had a toddler and an infant at the time. During our five days together, I observed the nature of parenting, and, in particular, of mothering, and it made me question whether or not I was ready to have children. I was overwhelmed with what I saw as the demands of motherhood, even for a woman whose husband who seemed thoughtful and giving. The children seemed to want or need their mother more than they did their father and, amazingly enough, she seemed to want and to need them as much. I wondered if I would ever feel that way and I questioned my ability to be a mother who kept on giving and giving. I had assumed that being a mother was relatively easy and that it would come naturally. What I saw caused me to examine my assumptions again. The questions that came to my mind were perplexing. Why did being a mother look like such a difficult task? What was wrong with me that I could not imagine myself being so giving? Mothering was something that was supposed to come naturally, was it not? Why did I feel so unready?

Yet despite my reservations, I eventually made a decision to become a mother. Nine years into my marriage, there came a point when I believed that I finally had enough information to think about undertaking what I considered to be a very important role. However, despite all that I had read and all that I thought I knew, nothing could have prepared me for motherhood and all the emotions connected to mothering. Prior to having children I thought that when I finally had a baby, it would be the ideal time to go back to school to pursue a Master's Degree. I pictured myself serenely reading and writing as my baby slept peacefully, and at all the right times, in the bassinet. On the days when I struggled to get out of my housecoat by the time supper came, I wondered how I could have been so naïve. Even now as I am in the midst of my studies with three children ages 9, 11 and 13, I wonder how I can possibly attend to my job, my thesis writing, my husband, my friends and my children at the same time. Combining the different aspects of my life has always been hard for me, even when outside appearances might make it look as if I am coping.

To educate myself for becoming a mother, I read many books and attended a number of early childhood courses and workshops. I became familiar with child-centered guidance, child development, creativity and play-based learning. When I had my first baby I was astounded at how hard it was to be a "stay-at-home" mother. Even though I had previously worked with young children, it was different for me when I was with my own child. Why did I feel like I could never do enough? And, most of all, what was wrong with me that I found mothering so challenging, even when I had so much information? When I contemplate these questions now, I recognize that I may have been seduced by the myths of motherhood: mothers are endless fonts of nurturance, mothers do not get angry, and mothers know how to raise their daughters, so daughters grow up thinking that mothering is easy (Caplan, 1989). These myths are so pervasive and powerful --no wonder I felt so unable to do it all.

Combining mothering and caregiving has the potential to be a complex and difficult task. I recall times when I have had to combine my work as mother and teacher. In particular, I remember a time when I was the substitute teacher in my youngest daughter's playschool. She was elated when she discovered that I would be her teacher. Reality hit when I greeted each child as they arrived and as each one fought to sit beside me when I read a story to the group. My daughter followed me around the room as I visited with each child at play. It was not a day that she seemed to enjoy being at playschool. I recall trying to talk to her about how hard it must be to share her mother but that I was needed elsewhere in the room. It was not the kind of day either one of us thought it was going to be. Neither were the times we went to Sparks and to Brownie camp when I was one of the leaders. When we got home from each of these trips, I recall having to cuddle and to reconnect with her and ease my own guilt about having to share my attention with the other children.

Other times in my life, when I have found myself combining my work as a mother and teacher, are also etched in my mind. They remind me of how hard it has been for me to do a good job of living both story lines simultaneously. One such occasion was when I facilitated a new mother's group with a local parenting association. Optional care was provided for the babies in a separate room while the mothers met, had coffee and snacks, listened to presentations and talked about new mothering and related issues. I had two children at the time, Reganne, who was 1 1/2 years old and Ryan, who was 3 months old. Since my daughter was getting too mobile to be in the room with the younger babies and was having difficulties being away from me, she often came into the room where the adults were meeting. I remember the day when I turned around in the middle of a workshop to find my daughter up to her elbows in Vaseline from her brother's diaper bag. I laughed at the time and cleaned up my daughter and the mess. I had few options. All I could do was cope with what was happening at the time. However, in retrospect, I began thinking about the difficulties of combining the work of mother and group facilitator. How did I manage to live out a story as a good facilitator and my story as a good mother? Splitting my attention and focus was challenging but it is something I think that mothers do all the time. Is it because we want to or is it because we have to?

I grew up as an only child where splitting attention was not an issue. I did not have to contend with sharing affections in my brotherless and sisterless world. I was concerned as a mother of three how to give each of my children the attention they needed and wanted. How could I possibly share affection with other people's children at the same time? When my children were small, an opportunity to have another child come into our home and be cared for by the same young woman who looked after my children when I went to work presented itself. I contemplated what sharing a caregiver with another family would be like and I was so relieved when this did not happen. It was hard for me to imagine my children's caregiver sharing her attentions with another child. It was even more difficult when I was approached to provide care for other children the times I was home with my own children. I could not bring myself to share my attention with other children when I barely had enough time and energy to do what I thought was necessary for my own children.

Caring for other children was not something I wanted to do, even though it seemed like an appealing way to supplement our family's income and something I *should* be able to do. I admire and value the students I teach who work in day care and family day homes. Many of them are women who are combining the work involved in being a student, a caregiver and a mother and I marvel at how they are able to live these story lines simultaneously. Despite respecting what these women do, I knew that I did not want to do so myself. I felt, what I thought was, a selfish need not to be tied down at home. I wanted to be able to visit friends and their children, to go shopping with my children and to have the flexibility to come and go spontaneously each day. I was terrified that committing to care for someone else's child would make it impossible for me to do these things. I did not want to lose my freedom.

I have a friend who just has to hold babies. Anytime a baby is near, she asks the mother if she can hold the child. She seems happy doing so and for all the years I have known her, she has said that she has wanted "just one more child". I admit with some guilt that after at least four or five years of holding my own babies, I was thrilled when each of them gained independence and took their first steps. I spent what felt like years wearing a baby in a Snugglie with another perched on my hip. I loved my freedom when all I had to do was hold a hand or two. As I admit these feelings, visions of what a good mother would do and say spring to mind for me. She would be all giving and all loving. Surely she would want to hold everyone else's baby, would she not?

My own dilemmas, guilt and issues concerning mothering and caregiving are part of what causes me to pursue this research. For me, the myths of mothering seem pervasive and undermine the reality and complexity of being a mother. Despite being important and difficult work, both mothering and caregiving seem to be taken-for-granted and invisible. In order to make mothering and caregiving more visible and for it to be better understood, I want to provide time for women who are mothers and caregivers to tell their stories. Maybe I am hoping that some of their stories will resonate with my experience of trying to combine mothering with other work. Perhaps I can look at my own uncertainty and guilt differently if I hear that it was not easy for other mothers either. Or maybe still, I am hoping to gain insight and learn from women who have lived the story of mother and caregiver.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, I have used the following definitions of terms:

caregiving: References to caregiving in this study refer to caregiving provided to children.

family day care/family child care: Paid child care arrangement where children are cared for in the home of a non-relative.

providers/caregivers/babysitters: Individuals who provide paid and unpaid care in their homes for other people's children.

registered/licensed family day care providers: Individuals who provide care for other people's children. These caregivers are in the regulated sector and are associated with and employed by family day home agencies.

family day home agency: An agency that links families who need child care with potential caregivers, collects fees from parents, pays caregivers, and licenses and monitors its' caregivers and their facilities. Many agencies also provide training and support to caregivers.

out-of-school care: Child care provided to school aged children before and after school and sometimes at lunch time.

private/ unregulated caregivers: Self-employed individuals who provide care for other people's children in their own home. These individuals are considered to be in the unregulated or private sector.

The Literature

This literature review is organized into six sections: literature related to family child care; literature related to who the caregivers are; literature related to the motivation for providing family child care; literature related to provider dissatisfaction; literature related to the perceived impact on the provider's children; and literature related to the ideology of mothering and caregiving. The research reviewed will include that conducted with caregivers in both the regulated and unregulated sector. It has been found that while there are some differences between these two groups relative to training, experience and number of children in care, in all other survey variables they did not significantly differ (Cox & Richardz, 1987). Also, there have not been many studies which have focused on individuals who provide care in the private sector since they are a group who seem hard for researchers to access.

Family Child Care

Studies about family day care include research that has provided data about child caregivers in broad based surveys such as the National Day Care Home Study (Divine-Hawkins, 1981), the National Child Care Study (Abt Associates, 1990), the Canadian National Child Care Study (Pence, Goelman, Lero & Brockman, 1992) and the Survey of Providers working in the unregulated sector (Canadian Child Care Federation, 1998). Other research has focused on training (Mueller & Orimoto, 1995; Trawlick-Smith & Lambert, 1995); quality care (Dombro, 1994; Kontos, Howes, Shinn & Galinsky,1995; Musick, 1996); and caregiver turnover (Bollin, 1993; Nelson, 1990b; Todd & Deery-Schmitt, 1996). The impact on children in care has been examined (Galinsky, Howes & Kontos, 1994) as well as the organization and use of space (Osborn, 1994); relationships with parents (Howes, 1988; Leavitt, 1987); and activities for children in care (Alston, 1984; Gonzalez-Mena, 1991). These will not be the focus in this review except where the findings pertain directly to family day care and mothering work.

Fosberg, Singer and Goodson claim that family day care is one of the oldest and most widely utilized forms of child care in the United States (as cited in Gramley, 1990). Relatively little comprehensive information about family day care was actually available when Gramley conducted her 1990 investigation. Subsequently, there has been a general surge of interest in child care issues which might account for the more recent attention given to family day care (Kontos, 1992). Although the literature which specifically addresses family day care is said to be "scanty" (Nelson, 1990), it has been asserted that there only seems to have been a greater focus on center-based research because "...the results [of family day home studies] have not always been disseminated through traditional scholarly sources." (Kontos, 1992, p. 3). For the purposes of this study, I have had to broaden my search methods to include personal contacts, government agencies, and associations such as the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF), the Alberta Association for Young Children (AAYC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

According to Pence and Peters (1992), there has been much less research conducted related to family day homes than any other child care settings. Even fewer focus on family day home providers in the unregulated sector. Caregivers who provide private child care are harder to locate and research because formal mechanisms for tracking them do not exist. In order to access caregivers in the unregulated sector, some researchers have randomly sampled homes by calling to ask if a private caregiver lived there and was willing to be interviewed or if anyone in the household used the services of an unregulated caregiver (CCCF, 1997). Other investigators have attempted to contact unlicensed family day home providers by posting notices on bulletin boards and in classified advertisements in newspapers. However, 65% of those unlicensed family day home providers who responded to notices in one study were unwilling to participate because they did not want to be observed or were concerned that the children would misbehave when observers were present (Kontos, 1994) . Because unregulated providers have been hard to access, researchers have been discouraged from working with this group (Peters & Pence, 1992).

Lack of research projects has further contributed to the invisibility of those who provide family day care. Studies conducted have been isolated and dissemination through professional journals has been limited . "Much of what is known about family day care is the result of local, often narrowly-focused studies" (Peters & Pence, 1992, p. 2). There has seldom been synthesis and analysis of the literature since it is lost beyond local regions or it has been published in journals of many fields and is, therefore, scattered. This has resulted in an inability to build a solid knowledge base for theory construction or decision making. Nevertheless, there have been attempts recently to review research and to indicate areas for further study (Kontos, 1992; Peters & Pence, 1992; Read & LaGrange, 1990a).

In the 1980's, research on family day home providers began with large surveys such as The National Day Care Home Study (Divine-Hawkins, 1981) which attempted to identify family day care providers. Broad-based quantitative surveys provided glimpses of child care use patterns and statistical information about family day care providers and their work. These later surveys (Abt Associates, 1990; CCCF, 1997; Read & Lagrange, 1990) provide a valuable base from which to conduct research even though they did not necessarily reflect the nature or ecology of care (Peters and Pence, 1992). Qualitative research emerging in the 1990's has begun to provide a richer look at the daily experiences of these caregivers (Gramley, 1990; Nelson, 1990).

Research on caregivers, especially those who provide care in the private or unregulated sectors, seems to have been as underacknowledged as the task of mothering and caregiving although the 1990's has seen the emergence of more research on family child care (Sale, 1990). Attempts have been made in Canada and the United States to gather information on family day care providers both nationally and locally in order to build a broader knowledge base about these women and their work. However, some researchers claim that "the maze, or the puzzle, of child care in Canada (and in the United States) has never been adequately mapped." (Pence, Goelman, Lero, & Brockman, 1992, p. 63).

Who are the Caregivers?

Results of surveys designed to look systematically at the population of family day home providers indicated that the average ages of caregivers was between 30 and 40 years old (Divine-Hawkins, 1981; CCCF, 1997; Read & Lagrange, 1990). However, these statistics fail to provide information about other providers who may range in age from 16 to 76 years old (Kontos, 1992). Overwhelmingly, providers were married women who were not the sole income providers for their households. The vast majority of those caregivers had children of their own at home and cared for an average of 2.3 to 3.5 children. When referring to themselves, these providers most frequently used the terms "babysitters", "child care provider" and "caregiver" (CCCF, 1998).

Few child care providers had training, experience caring for children outside the home (Divine-Hawkins, 1981) or early childhood training (Read & Lagrange, 1990).

Although statistics on age of the provider, number of children cared for and education of the caregiver are discussed, most studies do not tell us about the day-to-day reality of the women who provide family day care. Nelson's research (1990) stands out as a qualitative investigation that delves into the subjective experience of caregiving. Her work includes portions of individual caregiver's stories which provide glimpses of individual experiences. In my study, I have attempted to further address the lack of detailed information available about mothers who remain home to care for their own children and provide paid care for other children at the same time.

Motivation for Providing Family Day Care

Motivation for becoming a day home provider appears to be rooted in an ideological and personal commitment to remain at home as well as in an enjoyment of working with children and in a belief that obtaining acceptable care for the caregiver's own children would be problematic should they enter the job market outside the home (Nelson, 1990). Many of the mothers in Nelson's study could not bear the thought of having someone else rear their children and could not comprehend why mothers leave their children to go to work. Needing to earn money was also an incentive for becoming a day home provider and it was seen as a way to supplement the family's income while still having the luxury of being a full-time wife and mother. In nine studies the three reasons most frequently cited for becoming a family day home provider were "loving children, staying at home with their own children and money [earning money or not having to pay others for child care]" (Kontos, 1992, p. 51).

Of the 345 women who responded to Nelson's questionnaire, 85% said that they began offering childcare from their homes because they wanted to stay at home with their own children (1990, p. 33). "For the majority of family day home providers, the immediate impulse to care for other people's children was rooted in their desire to stay at home and continue caring for their own children while earning a living." (Nelson, p. 90). Nelson also claims that caregivers often "...define themselves as a mother who is committed to mothering as a primary role." (p. 90) Some of the women in this study began caregiving simply because they were looking for playmates for their own children and commented that there were always children in their homes.

Mothers chose home-based work as family day care providers in order to be full-time mothers to their own children (Innes & Innes, 1984) and to embrace an "intensive mothering role" as identified by Hays (1996). This assumes a mother's willingness to respond to her child's needs, "even when to do so is at the cost of her own well being." (Nelson, 1994, p.182). Despite the ideal of intensive mothering, it has also been found that while women identify themselves with full-time work as mothers, actual practice shows that very few of them were actually focusing primarily on their children (Ranson, 1999). "Full-time mothers are not always doing mothering. Most have busy and stressful lives in the community. They are not 'mothering' on a full-time basis." (Ranson, p. 65). Ranson suggests that the ideology of the full-time mother is perhaps a very powerful construction that most mothers cannot live up to even if they are at home.

There is some consistency in terms of provider's reported motivation for provision of family day care services. What is evident is a desire to be with children and to be at home with one's own children whether it is to be fully involved in their upbringing or to avoid the problems and cost of finding care outside the home (CCCF, 1997; Read & Lagrange, 1990). Despite this, research that has examined the ideology of mothering suggests that being at home with children full-time might be more of a myth than a reality (Eheart & Leavitt, 1989; Ranson, 1999).

Caregiver Dissatisfaction

A commonly mentioned drawback related to providing family day care was the interactions between caregivers and other parents (Divine & Hawkins, as cited in Atkinson, 1988). Caregivers expressed dissatisfaction with late or partial payments, with parents not picking up children on time, with parents' high expectations and with parents asking for exceptions to established policies. Some studies suggest that caregivers seem to have an easier time coping with the children in their care than dealing with the parents of those children (Atkinson, 1988; Dimidjian, 1982), while other studies contradict these findings (CCCF, 1997). When asked about their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their job, caregivers rated relationships with children the most satisfying, followed by being self-employed and relationships with parents. Least satisfying for these providers was the lack of respect for their profession, the few available supports or training, and the low pay (CCCF, 1997; Read & Lagrange, 1990).

Another issue for the women who provide care for others centered around forming relationships with children who would eventually leave their care (Innes & Innes, 1984). "The most painful difference between mothering one's own children and mothering another's is the inevitability of loss" (Nelson, 1994, p. 199). This loss is made even more difficult when a provider no longer cares for a child because the child's parents are dissatisfied.

Dissatisfaction and stress also occur because caregivers are at home with their own children while providing care for other children. The Canadian Child Care Federation suggests that "providers, who did not have their own children living with them, were consistently more satisfied with all aspects of the profession than those who did." (CCCF, 1997, p. 10). For example, caregivers who care for their own preschool children appear to experience higher levels of stress in their caregiving jobs (Todd & Deery-Schmitt, 1996). Also, having to combine the mothering and caregiving roles has the potential to create boundary confusions which can contribute to caregiver stress and job dissatisfaction (Bollin, 1993). Boundary confusion results when there are not clear distinctions between mothering and caregiving and when these two kinds of work interfere with each other.

In addition, combining mothering and caregiving has the potential to interfere with the rest of the family. Nelson (1990) states that caregivers have to win tolerance from their families because of the costs their work imposes on the family in terms of sharing their home with other children. "A husband's acceptance of the demands of family day care is hinged on recognition that the demands are legitimate; it also hinges on recognition of the material benefits derived from this work." (Nelson, p. 125). Women who care for other's children in their homes often struggle to respond to the demands of the domestic domain and their paid work simultaneously (Glenn, Chang, & Forcie,1994). It has been claimed that "when domestic chores are added [to providing family day care], the demands on a woman can be overwhelming" (Nelson, 1990, p. 39). Nelson described a day home provider who got up at 5:00 a.m. to do laundry and housework in order to get ready for the day before the children arrived. Nelson was also found that when caregivers were not able to attend to their household tasks because children were in their care, it had implications on the amount of time they had to recuperate for the next day.

The Caregiver's Children

Mothers who provide family child care overwhelmingly claim that they entered the field of family day care in order to be at home with and raise their own children (Nelson, 1990). Despite this, it has been noted that some caregivers believe that "caring for others 'short changes' their own children - even though they are at home, [mothers] have little focused time for their own children" (Glenn, Chang, & Forcie, 1994, p. 194). Ranson (1999) contends that being at home full-time does not necessarily mean that the mother is always exclusively devoted to the needs of her own children.

Family child caregivers claim that awareness of their own children's needs increased and that they had an opportunity to be at home with them as a result of being a day home providers (Atkinson, 1988). On the negative side, providers note that their children wanted "more attention when other children were in the home, that they seemed to need more assurance of their specialness and that they expressed feelings of jealousy towards the other children." (Atkinson, p. 402). In addition, providers' children tended to engage "in more negative social and emotional behaviors" (Wandersman, as cited in Atkinson, 1988, p. 400). These children were expected to share not only their material possessions but also their mother's time and love as well.

It has been recommended that the children in care be younger than the caregiver's own children (Trawick-Smith & Lambert, 1995) so that jealousy is minimized. However, when there are younger children in the house, there is the danger of older children being pressed into service as helpmates to an overworked mother (Nelson, 1990). Assuming a parent role prematurely has the potential to place extra stress on the child.

A cause of stress for mothers relates to the time they have available to participate in their own children's school activities. It has been suggested that when mothers care for other children in their homes, they get fewer opportunities for involvement in their children's school events (Nelson, 1994). Some mothers commented on the irony of deciding to work at home in order to be available for their own children when they are unable to participate in school activities when they wanted to do so (Glenn, Chang & Forcie, 1994). "That's been my biggest disappointment this year, not being able to go to my daughter's school when I wanted to. Yet here I was at home and still I couldn't leave." (Nelson, 1994, p. 194).

Even though mothers experienced disappointments, there has been speculation that in order to reconcile negative effects on their own children, women attempting to be good or perfect mothers often deny or minimize these effects or see them as temporary (Nelson, 1994). In an attempt to justify that they were not able to provide what they had hoped for their own children, it has also been suggested that these women have had to redefine good mothering (Glenn, Chang & Forcie, 1994, p. 195). It is difficult for providers who were interviewed in the midst of mothering and caregiving roles to readily admit that this arrangement was not fulfilling their expectations regarding their own children. Former caregivers have been more able to talk candidly about the disadvantages that they denied existed when they were in the midst of mothering and caregiving. Speaking in retrospect, a caregiver commented, "I always wondered if I was really benefiting my kids by taking care of other people's kids at home because it was a lot more of my time, and my patience was more worn out by the end of the day than it would have been if I had just had my own." (Nelson, p. 196).

The Ideology of Mothering and Caregiving

Most of the caregiving work in society is performed by women in their personal lives as mothers, daughters and wives and also in their professional lives in professions such as nursing, social work, teaching and caregiving (Baines, Evans & Neysmith, 1991). For women in these professions, the work they do at home is often duplicated in the workplace and both are undervalued and underpaid. Similarly, it has been posited that child caregivers are typically underpaid because they do the work of mothers who are paid nothing for their work as caregivers (Ferguson, 1991). Since it takes place in the private sphere "...[caregiving] is largely invisible and unrecognized, and family day care providers may be seen by others as not really working." (Dornbusch & Strober,1988, p. 121). It has been speculated that caregiving may not even be considered legitimate work by the woman herself (Nelson, 1990).

Because family child care is undervalued, it is also underpaid. Some of the best caregiving arrangements are some of the least expensive because they are undertaken by mothers who decide to remain at home with their own children (Scarr, 1984). From a feminist perspective, it has been noted that family day care is of concern since women are being exploited when they are paid less than the real cost of their work (Skold, 1988). "Because she can care adequately for only three or four infants and toddlers, a day care mother typically works for less than minimum wage." (Scarr, p. 227) This would seem to mean that by caring for more children (something that may or may not be able to be done adequately) an unregulated day care provider would be more likely to earn a better living from caregiving. In addition to being undercompensated for their work, caregivers often find it hard to put a price on caregiving especially when there is an emotional attachment with the child and the family (Nelson, 1990a).

Ranck (1990) contemplated the question of why women's roles have been linked so closely and for so long to the biology and sociology of the family and the home. Ranck posited that maternal work, such as mothering and caregiving, suffers from the belief that these roles are simple and easy and that women love the work so much that they are willing to engage in it for little or no pay. The implicit assumption amongst sociologists, psychologists and the general public was that normal women enjoyed looking after their children and found meaning and identity in that experience. When there is lack of acknowledgment and respect associated with child caregiving, providers find themselves in the position of feeling powerless (Rutman & Boisseau, 1995).

Most day home providers have defined themselves as a mother who has committed to mothering as a primary role (Nelson, 1990). Similarly, Gramley (1988) found that "the most frequently expressed perception of self related to work role was that of mother" (p. 7). Providers spoke of being like a mother to the children in their care and feeling like a mother-figure. One caregiver commented that "child care is like being at home and doing what a mother would naturally do" (Gramley, p. 8). Providing child care was an extension of mothering for these women and "the ways in which they saw themselves were influenced by the more traditional view of women as mother and homemaker" (Gramley, p. 8). Despite aligning themselves with mothering as a model for the care they give, providers also have to find a way to reconcile that they have not been able to give their children what they had hoped for by staying at home (Glenn, 1994) .

It has been speculated that because family day care providers consider the jobs that they perform as an extension of motherhood, they do not require any special training (Glenn,1994). Similarly, unregulated caregivers were found to "glorify 'old fashioned' maternal care" and were resistant to licensing and training because it seemed to put their vision of good mothering in jeopardy (Enarson, 1990). They insisted that formal training was irrelevant for caregiving and that their role as a mother was sufficient expertise for the job of caregiving. This belief is reflected in caregivers' own words: "I would like to think that my experience as a mother is enough." and "My primary qualification is that I've had hands-on experience for many years." Another caregiver adds, "Although having formal education in early childhood development has been my greatest asset, I cannot underestimate the experience gained in being a mother of two." (Read & Lagrange, 1990, p. 15-16). Despite these feelings, there is research evidence which shows that increased levels of relevant caregiver training impact positively on the quality of care provided for children in family day home settings and that training is a better indicator of responsive, sensitive caregiving than experience (Kontos, Howes, Shinn & Galinsky, 1995).

Conclusion

Research in the field of family day care has emerged with some broad-based quantitative surveys beginning in the 1980's. More recently, qualitative investigations have also been conducted and have added to the information available about these caregivers. While statistics provide some information about these caregivers, they tell us little about the day-to-day issues that are meaningful to mothers who provide child care in their homes. Responses to surveys tell us answers to questions presented by the researchers but hearing family day care providers' stories of mothering and caregiving adds to the facts and figures and the body of information available about these women.

Chapter 3

Research Approach

Following a Qualitative Path

Early in my graduate program, I had a strong sense that qualitative research methods fit best with who I am and what I wanted to learn about mothering and caregiving. During one of my first courses, when my classmates and I reviewed articles on research studies, I realized that I wanted to hear more directly from research participants. My inclination and curiosity caused me to want to look beyond the quantitative data towards the actual stories of the people involved in the research. I wanted to gain an understanding of the experiences that lead them to respond to questionnaires in the ways they did.

For example, I reviewed a study that examined the factors associated with sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents. Luster & Small (1994) suggested that two of the significant predictors of sexual risk-taking for adolescent girls were a lack of communication about birth control with the mother and low levels of parental monitoring. As a mother of a young adolescent girl, this topic was of particular interest to me and yet I found myself feeling dissatisfied by the time I got to the end of the article. I wanted to hear more about the nature of the existing relationship and communication between the mothers and daughters in order to gain better sense of what supported adolescent girls and what did not. I wanted to hear girls' perceptions of parental monitoring and discussion about birth control they received so that I could be satisfied that I understood what was perceived positively or negatively by the girls themselves.

As I read the study, I had a hard time accepting that the findings could be applied universally. I agreed with the constructivists who acknowledge multiple realities and the improbability of the existence of one unequivocal explanation (Guba, 1990). The premise that experience was individually constructed made sense to me. I found myself wondering how this fit in with the research I was reading that tended to group respondents together. While I acknowledge the legitimacy of quantifying some data, I also think that data collected by qualitative methods can add information and provide a richer context. As I pondered the statistics presented in this study on adolescent girls and their mothers, I questioned how researchers could determine why participants behaved in the ways they did without knowing the individuals in more depth. It made sense to me that human behavior was too complex to attempt to search for cause and effect (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992) and I realized that what I sought was better understanding of a few individuals rather than statistics representing many. Hence, descriptive and rich qualitative research where data was not reduced seemed to fit with what I wanted to know.

Articulating Research Goals

As well as being aware of questions I wanted answered in my research, I also had a sense of how I wanted to conduct my research. Thus, I begin by articulating what was important to me in doing this research so that the reasons for my decision to embrace a qualitative approach become clearer.

Listening

I believe that there is much value in listening. I see listening as a powerful tool for healing and for problem solving. Listening conveys respect for the ability of the other person to figure things out and carries with it a strong message of acceptance. In my research with women I wanted to provide the time and space to hear their stories and, in doing so, hoped to affirm and support each of them and the work they do. In order to create a safe space for participants to disclose their stories, it was vital for me to respond to what they said in ways that did not judge what was being said. Feeling listened to and validated contributes to feeling valued and, in order for me as a researcher to do this, I had to stay alert to ways to acknowledge and hear what these women were saying. Responding to participants in ways that allowed them opportunities to be listened to and for their stories to be heard is something I highly regarded. Consequently, listening with full attention, acknowledging what has been shared, inviting disclosure, and checking out my interpretations needed to be part of the way I was going to do my research. Inviting participants to share their experiences and listening to the stories they told would send an underlying message that what these women have to say was important (Weber, 1986).

Validating

I hoped that by encouraging the telling of and by listening to these women's stories that I would be able to validate their experiences. I am purposeful in my research about providing opportunity for the work of women as mothers and child caregivers to become more visible. I believe that mothering and child caregiving are work that have traditionally been marginalized and taken-for-granted. I seek to make this kind of women's work more visible in my research not only for the reader but for the women involved as participants. Nielsen (1990) identifies this as a feminist perspective. It endeavors to make that which was previously invisible, such as women's work, more known. A feminist perspective encourages the study of phenomena which have not been deemed worthy of study in the past (Polk, 1995). Hence, the stories of women's work are finally seen as valuable and recognized as legitimate.

Collaborating

Both the product and the process were important to me in conducting this research. I came into this study as someone about to learn from the participants. I was not comfortable with assuming an expert stance and I believed that participants are the experts of their own experience. This represents a feminist epistemology which recognizes women as knowers or agents of knowledge (Harding, 1987). Working together to negotiate participation and identify individual issues connected to mothering and caregiving was important to my research. Findings should be the creation of the researcher and participant who collaborate and work together to come to shared meanings.

Increasing Knowledge and Understanding

Increased knowledge and understanding of the day-to-day lives of women who combine mothering and child caregiving was another goal of my research. Westney, Brabble and Edwards (1988) refer to these kind of issues as the "ordinary business of life". They claim that what might seem to be the mundane problems and circumstances that occur daily are really fundamental issues relevant to the structure of human existence. I hoped that hearing the experiences of women who have combined mothering and caregiving would provide some understanding of women's work that has long been ignored in the traditional, patriarchal research community.

> When one adopts narrative inquiry in order to understand broad social phenomena more clearly, one rarely expects to intervene in the lives of the people being studied. Instead, one elicits and interprets stories in order to understand how some aspect of the world works. (Ellis, 1998, p. 36)

I wanted to hear from the caregivers themselves to provide richer, more complete information about what they do in order to increase understanding of their work as mothers and caregivers and the contexts within which they do their work.

Discovering Narrative Inquiry

It was not until I discovered research conducted by Bach (1993) related to the experiences of adolescent girls that I became aware of a specific qualitative method that would convey what I was seeking in a way that embraced how I wanted to conduct my research. This method was narrative inquiry. After reading Bach's thesis, I was struck by how complete and detailed the girls' stories were. I gained a better sense of their motivation and values. Bach seemed to have an ability to develop relationships with the participants and to allow for the girls' voices to be individually represented.

This was the kind of research I wanted to do and so I began to learn more about narrative inquiry. I discovered that narrative inquiry encourages the voices of participants to be heard by inviting them to tell their stories. Narrative inquiry, as a research tool, provides an opportunity to acknowledge and validate the work that mothers do by listening to, and writing about their stories. Using this approach, collaboration can play a vital role as participants and researcher work together to negotiate meanings and to represent stories in ways that reflected the participants' life experiences. Because narrative inquiry presents the experience of participants through stories, it has the capability of presenting more complete details of individual realities.

My desire to utilize a narrative approach in this study was reinforced as I conducted the literature review related to mothering and child caregiving. I became aware that there was a growing body of facts and figures related to the women who provided family child care and that fragments of these women's stories were only just beginning to emerge. Few places in my literature review did I come across research that attempted to tell the stories of individual caregivers in depth. The exception was Nelson's work (1990). I wanted my narrative inquiry to further address the gaps in the literature and add to the understanding of the experiences of women who combine mothering and caregiving.

Encouraging participants to tell their stories fit with my interest in listening and validation. In narrative inquiry searchers work towards intimacy with participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and this met my interest in collaboration. As the tellers of stories, the women involved in narrative research become the experts relative to their experiences. Narrative inquiry facilitates visibility as it tries to figure out the "taken-for-grantedness" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 78) of everyday work that women do. Validation and recognition come from providing the time and space for women to tell their stories. There are powerful messages of value and acceptance as these stories are gathered.

Because narrative inquiry encourages the telling of stories in the context of each woman's experience and situation, it permits an in-depth examination of this work. I believed that such an approach could add significantly to what was known about mothers who provided child caregiving since these experiences were told by women who did the work of mothering and caregiving. Hearing individual stories, thoughts and feelings, leads to increased knowledge and understanding on the part of the researcher of the experiences lived by these women. It has been claimed that narrative inquiry is used to study every day people. "From this vantage point, one may look at people who represent either a process or group. By learning about these individuals, we can see the phenomena more clearly in their context." (Josselson, 1993, p. xiii). Thus, learning more about individual mothers and caregivers can provide valuable information which might provide increased understanding of this underappreciated work.

A goal of narrative inquiry is to create a new meanings for both the participant and the researcher. These new meanings or awakenings come from the telling and re-telling of stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I expected that this would facilitate an inner sense of awareness for participants that could possibly contribute to a broader understanding of combining mothering and caregiving. In addition to providing understanding, narrative inquiry encourages participants to possibly know more about their own experiences in order to provide both a vehicle to process and a vehicle to reflect upon mothering and caregiving. I hypothesized that telling their stories would empower these women to make their own meanings or awakenings. Being able to figure it out would help women feel competent and capable as they re-told their stories of mothering and caregiving. If a woman reported a story in which she may have felt overwhelmed, her re-telling of it in the present may awaken or illicit some insight that makes her feel wiser.

Simply stated, "For us narrative inquiry is the best way of representing and understanding experience." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18). Because narrative inquiry supports and encourages the telling of stories, it could provide the depth of information I sought about women's experiences with mothering and caregiving. Telling stories facilitates women's work being more visible and can lead to increased understanding of the complexity of their experiences. So not only does narrative inquiry fit with what I want to know in my research, it also encourages listening to and acknowledging women's stories as well as working collaboratively with them to come to shared meaning.

Identifying The Participants

Purposeful sampling is a process whereby participants for a research study are sought who can best illuminate the topic or phenomenon rather than to ensure that the characteristics of study participants appear in the same proportion as in society (Bodgan & Biklin, 1992). I sought to involve three women who remained at home with their own preschool children while they concurrently provided paid child caregiving to other children in their own homes. I was seeking as participants in this study caregivers in the unregulated sector who were not affiliated with a family day home agency because these women have been minimally represented in the literature to date.

Early in my research, I contemplated whether hearing from women who were in the midst of mothering and caregiving or hearing from women who could examine their experiences in retrospect would best provide the stories I sought. Originally, I looked for women who were currently involved as mothers and caregivers as research participants. Who better to be able to talk about mothering and caregiving than those individuals who were immersed in it? However, an article on sacred, secret and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) lead me to make a decision to seek out women who were looking on their experiences in retrospect.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) distinguish between sacred, secret, and cover stories in the school setting. They suggest that sacred stories are the ones that come from the hierarchy and are the stories that often shape what stories teachers tell about their schools as well as about themselves and their teaching. When a teacher's knowledge about him or herself does not conform to the official, sacred story, teachers create cover stories. The cover stories portray the teachers as congruent with the image portrayed in the sacred story. A team teaching example which these authors provided showed that because the official, sacred story of the school portrayed team teaching as a successful endeavor, teachers felt compelled to tell stories of its success (cover stories), even though their own stories did not always necessarily match this. Teachers' lived experiences were shared only in secret stories that teachers told in private and in retrospect.

The ideas underlying the notion of sacred, cover and secret stories are ones which relate to my emerging understanding about women's stories of mothering and caregiving. In situations wherein women provide care for other people's children so that they themselves can stay at home with their own children, there may be sacred stories that present the job of family day home provider as the solution to a mother's need to contribute to the family income while being there for her own children. It is a sacred story that mothers may desperately want to believe in, especially while they are in the midst of the work of mother and caregiver. In cover stories, these mothers portray themselves as good mothers and good caregivers even if their secret stories do not necessarily portray this ideal.

Nelson (1994) commented that, in retrospect, family day home providers were more likely to admit that the juxtaposition of mothering and caregiving was not as ideal as they portrayed while they were in these roles. She noted that it was later, when they were not in the midst of telling their cover stories--the stories of success--that they were able to tell the secret stories of how their own children might not necessarily have benefited from the arrangement as much as they had hoped initially. It may have been necessary for these women to tell cover stories that fit with the sacred story so they did not feel as if they failed their children or themselves. The cover stories, those which extolled the benefits of being a family day home provider, were the stories which affirmed they were doing the right thing.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) note that it can take years for secret stories to surface and that it can happen when another individual's story of failure, a secret story, is revealed. The authors also attribute the passage of time as a possible impetus for the disclosure of secret stories. This last assumption has implications for my research. In order to be privy to some of the secret stories, I had to talk to women who were looking at their experiences of mothering and caregiving in retrospect, from a place of safety. There they might feel more comfortable with letting go of possible cover stories. Nurturing a relationship by listening and working collaboratively with these women would encourage the telling of secret stories. In order that I would not become complacent and see my role as only that of listener and one who acknowledges, I had to be conscious of sharing my own stories. Disclosing my own uncertainties and struggles might contribute to the feeling of safety participants needed so they could tell their secret stories.

Finding Women to Participate

One of the women who participated in this study, Fran, provided care for two of my children a number of years ago. When I spoke to her about becoming involved in some coursework I had been doing, she agreed to participate and, then, later agreed to be involved in my thesis investigation. The other two participants, Shauna and Victoria, emerged quickly when I asked friends and colleagues if they knew anyone who stayed at home with her own children while providing paid, private child care and whose children were now in school. Rather than contacting these women initially myself, I asked my friends to pass on my name and phone number or to ask each woman if she was comfortable with them giving me her name and phone number. In our initial phone conversation, I described my research to each woman and then gave them the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A). I provided them time to think about their involvement before making a decision and indicated that there was no obligation for them to participate if they decided against doing so after hearing and reading about my proposed research. I purposely sought research participants through friends and colleagues and hoped that having a connection already established between us would encourage the development of our relationship.

Considering Ethical Issues in Narrative Inquiry

Informed consent and protection from harm are two dominant issues that investigators need to consider related to ethics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). An Informed Consent Form which described in straight forward language the nature of the study, time commitments, and issues related to confidentiality and the voluntary nature of involvement was given to potential participants.

Beyond signing the consent form, "ethical matters need to be negotiated over the entire narrative inquiry process" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 120). This meant that it was my responsibility to ensure participants' on-going needs for anonymity. For example, in initial conversations with one woman, she indicated that she did not feel the need for name changes in her transcripts and story. However, as time passed and we discussed her experiences with parents and children in her care in more detail, she began to feel the need for increased confidentiality. The passage of time and the development of a closer relationship with me may have increased her comfort level with respect to disclosing more intimate situations. Had the issue of confidentiality been dealt with and dismissed in our initial meeting she might not have had the opportunity to rethink the extent to which she would become involved and her emerging need for privacy.

I negotiated with each participant concerning how to alter names, details and circumstances that might reveal her identity. Because I valued collaboration in this research, my aim was to be aware of the process and how I involved participants in this kind of decision making. This consciousness is inherent in the narrative process as attention to relationships with participants is of vital importance.

I sought permission to tape conversations with participants as part of the informed consent process and this was also was discussed prior to each taping. The consent form indicated that transcripts and tapes would be kept for one year after completion of this thesis and then would be destroyed. Where a participant might not be comfortable with taping, I was prepared to take field notes and I was prepared to ask permission to do so. I transcribed each tape myself so that I would be fully aware of the contents as well as the intonations and silences.

Narrative inquiry is intended to be affirming, collaborative and supportive of women and the roles they assume. Principles of feminist research and counseling provide the basis for interaction with participants. This approach to conducting research is based on the belief that women have the right to be valued and respected, a belief in the development of non-judgmental, tolerant egalitarian relationships between women, and a responsibility to acknowledge, accept and validate women (Ivey, Ivey & Simek-Downing, 1987). When building a trusting and affirming relationship with a participant, there is a possibility for disclosure of events that may be upsetting to the participant. In such circumstances, my role as investigator was to acknowledge what was being disclosed and to provide information about resources in the feminist counseling community in order to assist the participant in coping with resulting uncomfortable feelings or to further examine issues. My intent in this research was to be supportive and not to cause harm to participants by purposely resurrecting negative memories or writing their stories in a way that was hurtful.

> As we compose our research texts, we needed to be thoughtful of our research participants as our first audience and, indeed, our most important audience, for it is to them that we owe our care to compose a text that does not rupture life stories that sustain them. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.174)

Consulting our consciences, as is done within a friendship, is an ongoing responsibility in narrative research and is part of the collaborative process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I had to be aware of this as I examined what each woman was telling me and as I decided how to work with each story.

Later in this chapter I will address this issue when I discuss resonance as a way to process and write about the participants' stories.

Creating Narrative Text

It has been suggested that when the researcher controls the content of the interview too tightly or asks questions that are leading or close ended, it is difficult for participants to tell their stories in their own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I was aware of this as I listened to each woman's story of mothering and caregiving and identified threads that emerged as important. This involved an initial taped informal interview with each woman as well as follow up sessions with them. I did not have a list of directed or close-ended questions for our initial meeting because I wanted these women to talk about what was important to them. My invitation to them was open ended, "I am interested in hearing about your experience as a mother and caregiver." I wanted these women to tell the stories that were important to them.

As they spoke, I listened with full attention and acknowledged what was being said. I contributed to the dialogue when I considered it relevant to do so by sharing some of my own related experiences. At the same time, I was conscious of providing participants with sufficient time to speak. I did not want to dominate the conversations. It has been said that "A good interviewer communicates personal interest and attention by being attentive, nodding his or her head, and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate." (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 97). In addition to these listening behaviors, I recognized that I had to pay attention to my body language to ensure that my posture was open.

Throughout this research study, I used my journal to capture my thoughts, impressions, conflicts, ethical dilemmas and insights I had related to research process and the topic itself. With this information in hand, the next step in the process was to compose each women's story. As each interview was concluded, I wrote field notes in order to record my reflections, observations, and to describe the settings and people involved.

Writing the Stories

I began writing each woman's story based on the taped interview and, when I had questions, I called or met with the participant to check my perceptions or interpretations. I consciously decided to present each woman's complete story in this thesis and later, in Chapter 7, discuss each story according to prevalent themes, clusters or threads. In doing so, I wanted to ensure that I did not reduce the stories and I wanted to provide anyone else reading this thesis with the opportunity to pick up on threads that they saw emerging in each woman's story. Once each woman's story was written, I gave her a copy of it and I provided her with time to think about changes she wanted to make before we met to talk about it. The revised written work was then given to each participant for further input. In keeping with the goals of narrative inquiry, it was important that this was a collaborative research project between me and each of these women. I sought input from them and clarification so that the final story would accurately reflect their experiences.

Because I valued collaborative relationships, a dilemma surfaced for me when I considered the manner in which to work with each woman's stories. If these women and I were to be partners in research, it meant that I could not be an expert who analyzed their stories and assigned causality. If I was to be successful in describing stories of women's work that has often been silenced, I felt I had to be careful not to marginalize these women by attributing blame and questioning their practices. I had to be cognizant of not perpetuating patriarchal ways of thinking, responding and being. The question became how could I respond to and write about these women's experiences and refrain from assuming an expert stance? Cole was advised to "listen and let each patient be a teacher" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p, 12). This principle provided a warning to me to remain alert to what role I played in the research and to come into it expecting to learn, rather than to assume an expert role. Having said this though, the problem of how to supportively process their stories in a supportive manner remained an issue for me to consider and resolve.

In a previous course during which I had conducted an interpretative inquiry with two stay-at-home mothers, I found myself being asked to analyze what these women were telling me (Matheson, 1998b). My uneasiness with this request surfaced after I submitted stories along with identification of themes to my professor. I was encouraged to pursue some of the issues raised by these women further, to discuss the implications of their concerns, and to analyze it related to what was in the literature. I struggled with the task. It felt as if I was minimizing what was happening with these women. In the rewriting of my assignment, I felt that I would not want the women to see the final, analyzed versions of their stories because my role seemed so distant, so outside the collaborative nature of our relationship. Until that point, I had provided each of them with a transcript and an initial version of their story. I felt like I had betrayed the confidences of the women. These women had disclosed their stories to me and now I was interpreting them and assigning meaning. I had to push myself to respond to my instructor's request but to do so just did not feel right. It was not a piece of writing I ever wanted anyone to see because it seemed detached and not supportive. My role seemed to be that of a distant expert or evaluator and hardly that of collaborator. This seemed very different from being involved in their stories as they resonated with my own experience. At that point in my studies, I did not have the information to articulate what I was feeling nor did I have a sense of how better to treat the stories. Reflecting on the notion of narrative unity (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988), this previous attempt at portraying their stories felt like a "me versus them" scenario rather than the more desirable "us" collaboration.

As I was searching for a way to create collaborative research, I found some help in the literature. Conle (1996) discussed metaphorical correspondences and how hearing a story could resonate with and trigger other stories. The contexts of each story may indeed be different, yet threads may carry from one story to another. I realized then that I could relate my own experiences as a way to comment on the stories of the women I was working with in my research. While I am not a day home provider, I am a mother and there would be threads that I might share with these mothers. This was reinforced in Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) work on qualitative research. They wrote about reading your writing with a critical eye and about being aware of bringing forward issues that the reader might recognize or questions they might have. I wondered how could I compare my experiences when I had not provided paid child care in my home as I attempted to use resonance to reflect and comment from my own perspective. The insights from Conle's (1996) writing on resonance have helped me to reconcile these feelings within myself so I can articulate them in my writing for others as well as find ways to be involved in these woman's stories and in identifying connecting threads.

Describing the Narrative Threads

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warn of the tensions involved in attempting to combine narrative with reductionist strategies. They suggest that attempting to present participants' stories in themes or to create common themes across participant's experiences can result in generalization that reduces them (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 143). This was something that I found myself doing when I was involved in an earlier interpretative inquiry with four mothers of adolescent girls (Matheson, 1998a). In my first attempts to process these women's stories, I identified themes common to all four of them. In my journal, I wrote:

> Initially I tried to find similarities and reduce these four mothers' stories to common themes thinking that this was the purpose of this kind of research. As I began to appreciate that there is not a universal experience and that multiple perceptions are what qualitative research is about (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), I started to realize that what these mothers did *not* have in common was also of interest (Matheson, 1998a).

In this investigation, I intend to search for threads that might run through individual women's stories and for the tensions that hold the stories together. Threads go beyond the cluster of topics. Similar threads can be found in discussion of different topics. For example, in the interpretative inquiry I mention above, each mother identified anorexia as a concern. Yet when I listened more closely, I began to hear different threads emerging when each of them talked about this topic. One mother discussed her worry about how little her daughter was actually eating. The anxiety in her voice spoke of her worry about her daughter's health and her feelings of helplessness in making any impact on her daughter's behavior. When speaking of anorexia, another mother's underlying concern seemed to stem from the pressure she was experiencing from relatives about how she was raising her children. This tension, related to being judged and to not living up to family members' expectations, was woven throughout her stories of being the mother of an adolescent girl. This thread emerged as she talked about a variety of topics such as her daughter's clothes, friends and activities. The tension, associated with living up to the expectations of her relatives, unfolded throughout the mother's story as she discussed the criticism she received from her relatives when her daughter was a baby and their constant advice as she became a teenager. Staying on the surface and identifying anorexia as a common theme would have precluded looking beneath the topic being discussed to the underlying tensions which were different for each mother. This concern about looking beneath the surface for threads with a concern for temporality, tension, gaps and spaces lead me to a more in-depth examination of the nature of threads as a way to understand narratives.

Discovering the Meaning in Metaphorical Cloth

Marlene Cox-Bishop, a committee member and a textile designer, challenged me to think further about threads with respect to women's stories. She prompted me to consider what actual threads look like, how they interweave, and the nature of their functions with respect to the structure of fabrics. I read about weaving and talked to a friend who is a weaver to find out more about threads, the process of weaving and the nature of cloth. Dr. Cox-Bishop encouraged me to use the metaphor of cloth as a way to understand the stories the women told me since threads make up the cloths that we encounter throughout our lives. We are swaddled in cloth when we are born and shrouded in cloth at death (Tovell, 1984). In many cultures (but not all), weaving has been exclusively women's work - what better metaphor to describe mothering and caregiving work that has traditionally been the domain of women?

In weaving, threads always run in two opposing directions. The warp threads run parallel to each other and are the lengthwise elements whereas the weft threads run at right angles to the warp threads (Held, 1978). The interlocking of the warp and weft threads creates the cloth or web. For the purposes of this study, I envisioned the cloth of the women's stories as consisting of the warp threads which represented mothering and the weft threads which portrayed caregiving. I began to see that the metaphor of cloth might represent the experience of women combining these two kinds of work. I wondered what each woman's cloth might look like since the way in which threads are woven impacts upon the strength, flexibility, durability, and the final appearance of the cloth. I wondered what threads each woman's cloth would consist of and how such threads would be interlocked. I wondered what each woman's cloth of mothering and caregiving might look like.

Differences may created in woven cloth in a variety of ways. For example, changes can be effected by altering the sett or the number of warp threads per inch. Grouping warp threads or leaving spaces between these threads creates a cloth with an open structure. A more open or closed weave can be created which alters the appearance and strength of the resulting cloth (Sutton, 1982). This cramming and spacing of threads forms a cloth which has both sparse and dense areas that let the light through and frame space. Much can be discovered in the places in between the threads, and in weaving, there may be about as many threads missing as there are there (Tovell, 1984). I wondered if anything would be missing from these women's stories and what I could discover in the spaces in between their words. There is often just as much to be learned from that which is said as from that which remains unspoken. Neumann reminds us that "...with every text that's told comes a silence that cannot be converted into words or understanding that is fully shared..." (1997, p. 92). I hoped that being aware of these spaces in between might make me more sensitive to the silences.

Another way differences can be created in cloth is by varying the tension of threads. Tension of the warp and weft threads, like stressors in life, impact on the final appearance of the cloth being woven. When the tension of the warp bands alternate from high to low in a piece of weaving, the resulting effect is horizontally puckered folds or seersucker which is a puckered cloth. If tension on the threads in weaving impacts the appearance of the cloth, might not tensions have the same effect on the appearance of the cloth of mothering and caregiving? Yet another way to create a seersucker effect is to create the warp from threads which respond differently when tension is released (Sutton, 1982, p. 48). Was it possible then that stories of mothering and caregiving which looked the same on the surface, might have been created in different ways?

In weaving, some threads appear on both sides of the cloth. Some threads appear only the surface and still others may only show up on the underside when the cloth is turned over. Metaphorically, it was possible that the threads which comprised these mothers' stories might be clearly visible or they might be not as easily identified. Knowing this, reminded me of the need to be alert to what was being said by each woman and listen carefully to her stories to be able to identify threads. Considering the story teller as a weaver might help me discover the threads in her stories.

When there are the same number of warp and weft threads per inch, cloth is said to be balanced (Sutton, 1982, p. 9). For example, if the warp threads were white and the weft threads were black, a balanced cloth would show the equal interplay of both these colors. When the balance is altered and the white warp threads are set more closely than the weft threads, the resulting cloth will be "warp faced". The white warp threads will dominate and the cloth will appear to be white. When the weft threads are more closely set, they will predominate and the cloth will appear black in color. Both the appearance and the performance of the cloth differs depending on whether it is warp or weft faced. Again, looking at the warp threads as concepts related to mothering and the weft threads representing caregiving, it is possible that the look and performance of each woman's cloth might depend upon which threads are more closely set and dominate. In addition, in tapestry, the pattern on the underside results in the same pattern but in reverse colors. Other cloth, such as brocade, is meant to be seen from only one side. The underside of different weaves can be a plain weave or may appear as a muted or messier version of the top side. I wondered what side of the cloth I would see in this research. I wondered what glimpses of the underside of the cloth might be shared when participants felt safe enough to tell secret stories.

Some threads in a cloth serve to strengthen the fabric while others can be decorative and other threads might serve both these purposes. While some threads make up the bulk or substance of the cloth, others are more fragile. Others, such as floats, may loop on the surface of the cloth and are anchored only at intervals. I wondered what functions the threads might serve in the stories of the lives of each of the women who participated in this research study.

Playing with the metaphor of threads and finding out about the roles threads serve in woven cloth has helped me visualize what the women's stories might look like. Reading about threads has also provided me with some exposure to the language of weaving. I learned such terms as spinning, transforming, interlacing, embellishing, decorating, constructing, coaxing, gathering, teasing, looping as well as technical terms such as warp and weft, sett, balance, cramming and spacing, and floats. This provided me with other words and concepts to utilize in thinking about, talking about and drawing the threads in the women's stories I collected.

Each woman weaves her metaphorical cloth of mothering and caregiving. Together we can trace the narrative threads which represent the lived cloth. By using threads and cloth as a metaphor, I am attempting to understand and portray narratively and visually concepts that may seem intangible and vague in a more concrete way.

In metaphorical cloth, threads may not intertwine in even, practical or realistic ways. There may be gaps, snags and holes. The resulting cloths might not be aesthetically pleasing. They may not be balanced or even very functional. The imperfections in the cloths of mothering and caregiving that might result from describing metaphoric cloth, might provide me with a way to avoid "...the 'Hollywood Plot' ... in which everything works out well in the end." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 181). Metaphorical cloths might be messy and impractical, just as real life can be messy and impractical. Metaphorical threads might not create pleasing and functional cloths. This imperfection and dysfunction may well represent "the messy business of life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Identifying Narrative Threads

In order to identify narrative threads in terms of mothering and caregiving, it was important for me to listen to the stories on the tapes and to read and reread the transcripts. Listening to the tapes with the transcripts in front of me, I jotted phrases which I thought captured how these women wove their stories as mothers and caregivers. I also cut and pasted sections of dialogue and organized them into what seemed to be similar underlying threads. I worked with the transcripts and highlighted passages, words and phrases in a variety of colors to identify similar interpretations, feelings and thoughts in each woman's story. I tried to remain very aware of temporality as I listened to the tapes. I tried to identify the underlying tensions that kept reoccurring as each of these women told her story about being a mother and caregiver.

I listened to the tapes with my eyes closed to hear the places where the participants put energy and where intonation and emotion lead me to believe that what they were saying was important to them. "Listening to energy" in participants' voices was a strategy I learned from speaking to Rita Knodel whose dissertation (Knodel, 1997) I examined in a narrative inquiry course with Jean Clandinin. This strategy gave me a different perspective from which to listen to the tapes and helped me hear the stories in a new way. Furthermore, it facilitated me hearing beyond what was being said.

After I identified threads in each story, I met participants to find out the extent to which my interpretations were personally meaningful to them. I had sometimes been able to identify threads that resonated for the woman involved. Other times, discussion revealed that there was a different underlying emotion or concern that I had misinterpreted or overlooked altogether. This reinforced for me the value of working collaboratively with participants to ensure that I was representing their experiences and thoughts in ways that were meaningful to them. Together we were weaving a cloth of meanings that were shared, a cloth that was composed of many threads.

To compose the narrative that represented the metaphoric cloth of each woman's lived story of mothering and caregiving, I went back to weaving books, pictures, and cloth itself. These images helped me to make connections between what I thought I was hearing in the women's stories and the way I might write about their lives. I shared my perceptions and pictures of weaving and cloth with each women and invited her input and impressions. Together we attempted to describe or weave the metaphoric cloth that might represent her lived cloth.

Summarizing the Research Design

I have decided to use a narrative inquiry method in this research. Open-ended interviews will be conducted with three mothers who have remained home to be with their own children and who have provided paid child care in their home to other children. They will be looking at their experiences in retrospect.

Each woman's story of mothering and caregiving will be written collaboratively with both the researcher and participants involved in their creation. Narrative threads will be examined together. A weaving metaphor will be utilized to describe narrative threads and to portray what each woman's cloth of mothering and caregiving might look like. Each woman's mothering and caregiving threads will be portrayed visually. By laying the caregiving threads over the mothering threads, a mothering and caregiving cloth for each woman may become more visible.

Chapter 4

Fran

Having reflected upon what I wanted to know, who I wanted to talk to, and how I wanted to proceed in this research, I began my work with Fran, Shauna and Victoria.

Chapter 4 focuses on Fran and presents her story of mothering and caregiving. What follows is discussion of the threads that emerged from her stories and finally I describe what the cloth of mothering and caregiving might look like for Fran. Similarly, Chapters 5 and 6, present Shauna's and Victoria's stories, threads and the cloth that might metaphorically represent each woman's experience of mothering and caregiving.

Fran's Story

Fran and I sat on a couch in the basement of my house sipping tea. As mothers of a total of seven children, there seemed to be very few places and times that we could spend a sustained amount of time together. We managed to do so on this evening, amid the laundry and toys.

It had been a while since Fran and I had connected. We lived in the same community and our paths had crossed at school, in organized programs, and at the playground over the years. There was a time, five years ago, when we saw each other more regularly as she cared for two of my children on a part-time basis in her home.

Fran has always stayed at home with her children--fifteen year old Annie; thirteen year old Adrienne; ten year old Curtis; and her youngest child, six year old, Chrissie. Fran showed me snapshots of the days when Annie was still a baby and her only child. Fran took Annie to work with her each day and I can still visualize the image of the small, cozy pottery shop owned by Fran. I recall a big black dog sitting on the floor next to the playpen where Annie spent time close to her mother while she worked. Fran has always been a mother who was comfortable when her children are nearby.

Despite making what she described as a "conscious decision" to stay at home, Fran spoke of how she came to care for other people's children almost "by accident". It seems that when Annie was small, Fran welcomed Annie's playmates into her home. She said that one thing lead to another and when the playmates' mothers went back to work, they often asked Fran to babysit. She recalled with fondness a time at the beginning of her caregiving career when she cared for three little girls who were Annie's age. "She [Annie] had a house full of friends. It was like a party." I could see Fran's eyes twinkle as she remembered all the fun they used to have. Fran smiled and laughed a lot as she recounted her story.

Fran had considered registering with a family day home agency when she first began to provide care for the children of two families from the neighborhood. However, she said that the parents' needs for part-time care did not fit with the minimum number of days per month required by the agency. Because her relationship with these families was casual and cooperative, together they worked out vacation times that coincided with Fran's family's holidays. For them, there just did not seem much point in involving an agency. "To heck with the day home [agency]." Fran exclaimed. "You know, Judy would pay them and then I'd have to go and get my cheque and we lived ten doors apart."

Fran cared for many children over the years and there have been very few times when she advertised or actively sought out children to care for.

Most have been the children of friends, neighbors and friends of friends. Most of the children who have been in her care had likely already spent time in her backyard. They would have experienced the sunflowers, a dog or two and the climbing structure that she and her husband built which was adorned with painted handprints of different sizes and colors . Or maybe the children would have been in her basement when she cleared all the furniture to make way for the labyrinth of boxes and cardboard that made up her famous "box maze". Fran's house has been, and likely will continue to be, a house which is full of children.

Fran always seemed to have a fun activity for children underway. For example, the children might be making lizards out of fun foam, decorating playdough shapes with fabric paint or making a giant water slide on the hill behind her house. As her children and those she cared for got older and more independent, Fran also found time to get some of her housework done.

> So while Mikey, Lucas and Chrissie were playing [with] Duplo, I've done the dishes, you know. While they are playing outside for five minutes, I vacuum the living room. So I can vacuum the house and while they are playing, throw a load of laundry in. I've been able to do a lot. Wash walls, do the bathroom, so that when it is evening time, we have family time.

Providing family child care in her home has permitted Fran to balance her household chores with child care duties so that she could focus on her own children at the end of the day. She surmised that if she worked in a job outside the home, she would be too busy and tired in the evening and on weekends to have "quality time" with her children. Fran described spending most of her Saturdays as a child cleaning house with her sisters. "It put a damper on the whole weekend." she said and Fran did not want this for her own children.

What Fran seemed to want for her children was a house full of playmates for them and fun things for them to do. At different times during her caregiving career, Fran thinks that she was able to make this happen. However, Fran also spoke with emotion as she related a time, a couple years ago, when she was feeling that things were getting a little too hectic. Between children she cared for during the day, those who came after school and her own four children, there was a period of time each afternoon when she was responsible for a large number of children. Fran described the balancing act she found herself in:

> Children had different schedules, so I would write schedules for each day and stick them up so I would know I had so and so, so and so and so and so. I would have a time schedule and I would color it in so I could glance at it and know exactly who I had and who I didn't have and it would be fine--but you know it was just for those couple months when it got real crazy.

Fran said that she found it hard to say "no" when someone asked for her help. While she recognized that this was one of the challenges of providing care for friends, Fran also indicated that there was another difficult aspect related to caring for other people's children. When I asked her what that was, she heaved a long sigh and slowly said "Not seeing kids anymore." On many occasions she and her family became very close to the children who were with them. Fran fondly described some of the relationships that formed. Her daughter, Adrienne, became especially attached to a little baby, named Maggie, who came into Fran's care when she was just three months old. Fran recalled:

> Adrienne used to go and steal the baby and five hours later her mom used to call and ask if she was bringing her back and, if not, to change her. So Adrienne would have a stash of diapers. She went out and bought diapers herself so she'd have a supply and she could say "I just changed her."

Although there were many children to whom Fran and her family became close, not all relationships were this way. She indicated that there were some children who she did not miss at all. She elaborated as she spoke of a couple of relationships that ended with her telling the parents that things were not working out and that she could no longer care for the children. One of the instances when this happened was particularly difficult because it involved Maggie's brother, Aaron:

> You know, I knew it wasn't working out. Like Aaron. It never really worked out. That was a bit complicated because we liked Maggie and to say to the mom we want the one child but not the other, and I think that is sort of what ended it. I sort of said to the mom "Do they *have* to be together? It's not like they play together. I'd really like to keep the one [the baby] during the day. Could the other one go somewhere else?" "No." Um, and I think that's why the situation arose because she knew how much I really liked Maggie—but she didn't appreciate that we didn't

> like Aaron. And it's hard to say that you don't like a kid. You try and make things work.

Despite trying hard with Aaron, it became an unworkable situation. "He wanted to karate chop all over the back yard. "I don't want you to kick me like that again." Chrissie would say. Fran felt that her children were not safe when he was around. They were also at risk when Fran cared for a brother and sister pair, Jason and Maria. Several incidents lead up to what Fran termed "the final straw" before she told their mother to find alternate care. Fran shook her head as she described her biggest regret: "I would have liked the final straw to have been earlier. The shovel swinging at Adrienne. I have to understand that the kid's not going to change character. This kid's character just doesn't fit. There are a lot of things you overlook". But what she just could not overlook was permitting her own children to remain in an unsafe environment.

Being available for her children and providing a safe, secure and loving environment was indeed what Fran saw as the best part about being able to work from her home. When I asked her about this, she responded without hesitation:

> I've always been there for my kids. If my kids are sick, I've been there. But a lot of the times it's not just because they are physically ill. You know they have had a really hard time, kids have upset them at school. Adrienne had a really hard time, some of the time. And I don't know if I wasn't in the home, what I would have done. If I had a job and my nine year old calls me up crying because Billy called her fat, lard ass and

shoved her face in the drinking fountain, I couldn't say "Well, sweetie, I'm sorry, I'm at work until 5:00. That's when I'll be home and we'll talk."

Being able to work from home had other advantages for Fran and her family. She described being able to purchase certain toys and equipment and write them off on her income tax return as a result of being self-employed. Fran spoke of her role as caregiver as justifying having toys all over the floor as children played in her living room all day. When her husband, Keith, stepped on them and asked, "Why are there toys all over the floor?" Fran described making a path for him so he wouldn't break any of the toys and added:

> F: But when I babysat, it added some validity to it. "Keith, I've had five kids all day. They play. This is how they entertain themselves. This is what they do all day." I've noticed that when he comes home it's, "Hi, how are you?" "Fine, sweetheart, watch out, make a path. Yeah, I've been busy, we'll clean it up later. Yeah, I've had Tess, Justine and Sonja all day." And it was, "Yes, okay". And I said, "No, laundry's not done. Now that you're home I can go down in the basement. I couldn't go down in the basement and leave the kids alone. Now I can go down and put a load in. Now I can go and iron your shirt. Maybe I'll get around to it tonight." That was sort of my job then.
>
> ML: And it would have been different if it was just your own kids at home, you think?

F: Yeah. If it was just my own kids, he would have expected to have walked across that living room. And he's come home and they've made these Duplo houses and they don't want to take them apart and they build them on the living room floor. And yeah, sometimes they are a bit high and yes, you have to shrink to watch TV. I say, "Keith, watch this. You slide it carefully to one side and the tower has moved over." [laughs] It's like today, he came home and there was [fun] foam all over the kitchen table because Katey and Chrissie were making foamy lizards. And "Oh, what's this?" "Katey and Chrissie were making foamy lizards." And you know, there's more understanding in it.

As Fran spoke, especially about her purchases of toys and equipment, I was nodding my head and thinking about the small water table I had in my family room and the number of blocks, puzzles and play figures I bought when my children were younger. That these kind of purchases seemed to need to be validated rang true for me. I used to tell my husband how valuable these toys were to our children's development. He watched as I hung mobiles in each room when the children were babies, and as I designated one bottom cupboard in the kitchen to store toys and board books as they were toddlers. Our dining room was transformed into a play room when they were preschoolers. I explained that these purchases and small inconveniences were justified because our children were cared for at home. I think I understand why Fran felt she needed to defend her actions to her spouse.

While caring for children in her home validated the purchases Fran made of toys and materials and justified messes in the house, it also posed some limitations on Fran's mobility. For example, she commented that she could not attend an exercise class as often as she might but she did manage to go to a class once a week when she cared for only one child during the day. Other than this, she seemed to be able to get out and about:

> I've taken them to the Craft Store, to the Library, I've taken them a lot of places. I don't know, I can't think of very many places I couldn't go with two or three little ones. Oh, okay, I haven't been to the gynecologist for six years. No way, man!"

We both laughed as we visualized this predicament and then Fran remembered a time when she was ill and had to take two children into the doctor's office with her.

Despite these limitations, caring for children in her home also provided Fran with the opportunity to be involved with her children's schools:

> Yeah, I've done the Publishing House at school and when they have an awards thing at school, I'm there. And if they have a play, I'm there. It's been nice being involved with the school. Having a job at the library say 9:00 to 3:00 yeah, I could always do the Publishing House at home but it's different when I'm down in the school every Wednesday morning. Everybody knows that we're there then. I walk around to the classrooms and I'm at Chrissie's classrooms when they are doing their book covers. And being there during the play, she stays with her class but just to wave to her. And like Curtis he goes to a different school and he missed going to Chrissie's school because he's not where his friends are or "where you are" so that's why I started a Publishing House at Curtis' school. He likes to see me over there sometimes. Like I made a stained glass for

> Chrissie's school and he wants me to make one for his school. I don't have any big social life but that's never really important to me.

There have been times, though, when being able to be at school has not been such a positive experience for Fran or her youngest daughter in particular. Fran spoke of a time when she wanted to surprise Chrissie by coming to the school at recess to play with her. Chrissie had just started grade one and really seemed to miss being at home with her mother. She would often ask Fran what she and the other children did during the day when she was at school. Fran felt compelled to tell her that they just did "boring things". September was a particularly tough time for Chrissie because Brianna was the only child who was home with Fran during the day. Chrissie would plead with her mom saying, "I don't want to go to school, then there's just you and Brianna at home. You are my mommy. Why do you stay with her?" Fran felt compelled to be there for Chrissie, so on this particular day she and Brianna hiked over to the school.

There was a hopscotch game drawn on the concrete just across from the back door of the school. Since there was still time until recess, Brianna and Fran began to play. When they jumped on the lines, they left a trail of dusty footprints in the squares and both of them found this quite amusing. Approaching the "home" square Fran twirled around, still laughing, to meet the gaze of Chrissie at the back door of the school. Her teacher had brought the class out early! "Chrissie was standing there and her face, oh my God, she just had these big eyes. She just stood there and she cried and cried." I hear Fran moan "Ahhhhh." I say, "That must have broken your heart." And indeed, it did. I cannot help thinking that this must have been particularly hard for Fran who was a mother who made a conscious decision to protect her children. In this situation, demonstrating to Chrissie that she loved her did not turn out in the way she intended at all.

As Fran told her stories of trying to be a good mother, I recalled times when my good intentions did not turn out as I had hoped either. When I worked part-time, my youngest daughter was cared for at the home of a kindergarten playmate. To show my daughter that I loved her and to ease my own guilt about putting her in care, on occasion I made special arrangements at work so I could leave to pick her up early. There were times when this worked out well and other times when I was greeted by my disappointed child who wanted to keep on playing. As Fran told me her story about Chrissie and the hopscotch, it brought my story with my daughter to mind. I believe that what connects them is the thread, the underlying tension, emotion or intent that we shared. We both seemed to be trying to do the right thing and having it backfire. For Fran, her good intention was to surprise her daughter at school and my good intention was to pick up my daughter early so we could spend time together. Neither of us had accomplished what we had intended to do.

In addition to the hopscotch incident, Fran mentioned a number of circumstances when caring for Brianna caused difficulties for her youngest daughter, Chrissie and explained that the situation was exaggerated because the child's mother was at the school and many of the children and staff there already knew who she was. Fran identified a number of strategies she used to minimize Chrissie's hurt feelings and jealousy:

> Lunch times, what I would do was give Brianna a snack like a Quaker Crunch Bar by 11:00 and put a movie on that Chrissie was bored of anyway and Chrissie and I would just have lunch together and towards

> the end of lunch time if Chrissie was finished, I would make Brianna's lunch and she'd eat and I'd have a few minutes to talk with Chrissie. Chrissie would want me to walk her back to school. I'd time it so that when Brianna had finished eating, we could walk back to school. If I laughed with Brianna or did anything to show I really enjoyed Brianna whilst Chrissie was there I was careful not to do this. She would just get so upset.

Fran must have found herself in a tenuous situation having to constantly be aware of her interactions with the other children in order to support Chrissie and spare her hurt feelings while at the same time attending to her caregiving responsibilities.

Despite the jealousy Chrissie experienced when Brianna was in Fran's home and the fact that arrangements with some children did not work out, Fran felt that staying home and caring for other children had worked out well for her. "It's been pretty good. I've really enjoyed it. And there's been so many times when I've been watching them playing nicely and it's been fun watching them. I like my house being busy. I never minded the noise."

Fran's Narrative Threads

There seemed to be two threads that weave in, out and through the stories that Fran told me about mothering and caregiving. The first thread was the dominant one in which she spoke of the many ways that she protected her children. The second narrative thread relates to how her work as a caregiver provided her with justification for her work as a mother.

Protecting her Children as a Narrative Thread

One of the threads that runs throughout Fran's story is that of wanting to protect her children. The issue of desiring to provide protection to her children is apparent in both the warp threads of mothering and in the weft threads of caregiving. Fran weaves her cloth in different ways depending on what kind of safekeeping she felt her children needed. The way Fran weaves her protecting story is temporal. Although it changes throughout time, it is there throughout her stories. Protecting her children is one of the ways that Fran acts out her ideas about what a good mother is. Her intervention on her children's behalf was intensified when she thought they needed protection or healing the most.

When I first examined Fran's tapes, I identified "Being there for my children" as a thread throughout her stories. However, Fran said that it was much more than that. It went beyond just being physically at home for them. Fran said that it had more to do with being there emotionally, "togetherness" and "a sense of family". We talked about re-naming the thread "Being involved with my children" to more accurately reflect her feelings and then came up with "Healing the hurt" or "Protecting my children" which she liked even better.

Fran described protecting her children socially. She sought out friends for them among the children for whom she cared. The reason Fran started caring for other children was to provide playmates for her oldest daughter. She protected her children emotionally when she attempted to heal the hurt when one of them was teased at school. And there were also times when Fran intervened to protect her children physically if she felt that her children were not safe when a particular child was present.

When her oldest daughter was small, Fran began to weave this protective thread by playing with bubbles and playdough in the front yard in order to attract playmates for her children. She described having a swing set and sand box in the backyard and a "play room with great big Mickey Mouse wall paper" so that their house would be appealing to other children. Fran commented, "It was almost like buying her friends to come over." and "It was like a party." Furthermore, Fran continues to act as a protector when she describes taking a van full of youths to the movies now that her oldest daughter is a teenager. Fran likes to provide her children with opportunities to socialize. Her children have never had to go to other children's houses, Fran says, because there are always lots of children and something entertaining going on at her house. Fran throws a protective mantle around her children when she tries to meet their social needs at home and when she cared for children who were the same ages as each of her children. She also protected her children, she says, by providing a variety of interesting activities for all the children.

As her children have grown older and their needs have changed, how Fran lived her story as a protector changed as well. For example, when one of her daughters was teased at school, Fran described taking on the role of consoler to try to heal the emotional hurt. She made sure to protect her children and make things easier for them to understand. To protect them from feelings of jealousy, she explained:

> "I've always made it very clear to my kids that, "You know Justine is coming over. I really like Justine. She's a very nice little girl and I would only have a little girl who was very nice come over. And then Justine goes home to her family, that's her Mom. I really like Justine. I don't

> love Justine, she's not my daughter. I really enjoy her." I've explained to my kids that whilst they are here, I am their Mommy and if there is a fire, I'm going to get them out too. I watch them just as much as I watch you to make sure they don't go in front of a car--but it is also understood that they are not my little girls, they are not my babies. They are somebody else's babies. "

Providing reassurance was one way Fran attempted to protect her children when they were upset. Another way Fran served as protector was by avoiding telling her children information that she thought might hurt or disturb them. For example, when Chrissie asked her what she did at home with Brianna and Maggie all day when she was at school, Fran told her, "They play Duplo, I guess. I don't know, I'm doing the dishes." Another time her response was, "Oh, we get bored out of our trees." when Chrissie asked what two other children did with Fran when she was away at kindergarten. When Chrissie saw a wrapper in the backyard from some bubble gum Fran bought Brianna, Fran found herself saying that Brianna must have brought it with her rather than reveal the truth.

Just as Fran tried to protect Chrissie by telling partial truths, I have also heard myself telling my other children that my youngest daughter and I have just gone grocery shopping when we have also stopped for a treat in order to spare their feelings. I, too, have attempted to explain to protect my children's feelings. For example, when I was a leader of my daughter's Sparks group, I used to talk to her most nights before we went to meetings to explain that my job was to be there for all the children. I tried to acknowledge how hard it was for her to share her mom with the other girls. I tried to protect her from feeling hurt, just as Fran seemed to do.

Sometimes situations called for Fran to protect her children by devising preventative measures to avoid jealousy and hurt feelings. To comfort Chrissie who did not like Fran being at home with Brianna while she was in kindergarten, Fran described the strategies she had to protect her youngest daughter. For example, while riding in the van, she enlisted the help of her oldest daughter to talk to Brianna so she could focus time and attention on Chrissie. The lunch routine involved Brianna eating a late morning snack and then watching a movie while Chrissie came home to eat lunch. To live her story of protector, Fran needed to anticipate which situations might upset Chrissie. She needed to find ways to tighten up the weave so that the cloth would protect her daughter.

I discovered more about Fran's efforts to physically protect her children by the manner in which she consciously orchestrated events and as she described making plans to get out of the confines of the house. She made sure that they went to various parks and playgrounds when she cared for a child who had aggressive tendencies. She was aware of having to give this child space to run, kick and jump so that the other children would not get hurt. "It's too much when my kids get hurt." she said. "They have to put up with uncomfortable situations--I don't want a home where my kids have to hide in their rooms." So Fran also set up different areas to play in her house when the combination of children did not play well together. "I'd have Allister here doing a puzzle, Mikey and Curtis playing with twirley things over there and I could leave Duncan and Ryan here playing Duplo--and there'd be a tea party on the front steps--dividing up prevents stuff from happening." At these times Fran continued to wear her protective mantle by using preventative strategies, however, when these did not work, she protected her own children by no longer caring for those children who were aggressive and hurt them.

Cutting the caregiving weft threads was sometimes the only way to protect her children.

Being involved at her children's school gave Fran another way to weave the threads of protection into her cloth. Not only was she available for her children but assuming the role of family child care provider allowed her the opportunity to be visible to their friends and classmates. This, Fran said, helped to facilitate friendships between her children and children at school. And she believed it also lead to easier access to, and positive communication with, the teachers and the principal when things were not working out. Fran also thought that volunteering in the schools contributed to her children's feelings of belonging and that it comforted them.

Another strategy Fran utilized to protect her children and their privacy as she cares for other children in her home, was to designate each of her children's bedrooms as a private space. They could retreat to their rooms if they wanted to get away from the noise and other children. She devised specific rules about the use of her children's bedrooms that have helped protect her children and ensure their privacy:

> My kids have always had their own rooms and that's their private space. People only go into their rooms if they are invited. So if they are having a friend over and I happen to be babysitting that person, they can invite their friend down to their room and that's fine. But they only go down if they are invited, so they have always had their own space. Christmas presents or something they don't want everybody else playing with, "Put it in your bedroom." But what's out in the living room is a free-for-all--but if they want to be on their own they can go to their bedroom. They haven't had to play with the kids I'm babysitting.

There are many ways that Fran lives out her story as she endeavors to protect her children. She protects them socially by finding friends, being visible at school and by providing an inviting play environment. Physically, Fran protects her children by intervening when she thinks her children are unsafe and by orchestrating events and play spaces to prevent disruptions and arguments. By comforting and explaining and structuring the environment, she attempts to provide emotional protection. Her ways of protecting are bound by time, shifting and adapting to meet new circumstances. The protective mantle is woven throughout Fran's stories but the circumstances in which she wears it change. The wearing of her cloth is much like weaving is in reality. It is a process that evolves and changes with the addition and deletion of threads and the ways threads are woven in the cloth.

Justifying her Work as a Narrative Thread

The second narrative thread that intertwines and weaves within Fran's story is one that involves her use of validation and justification. The validation threads are ones that run horizontally, as weft threads, in the cloth of mothering and caregiving. These weft threads serve to support and strengthen her children as they intertwine with the mothering warp threads.

The manner in which Fran combines mothering and caregiving provides the justification for many of the extras she is able to acquire for her own children, as well as for those in her care. Caregiving has enhanced Fran's ability to provide extras for her children. She explains this by saying,

> Babysitting has been good for us and good for the kids. It has allowed us to get bigger, more, and more complex toys. I look at it this way. If I

> get paid $300.00, and there's extra after paying bills, I can invest $150.00 into toys. It's like putting it back into the business. I've always had lots of toys, an abundance. There's never been a shortage of toys. And kids like coming here because there's always been something neat to play with.

Fran's work as caregiver has not only provided justification for her purchases of toys and equipment but it has also encouraged tolerance on the part of her husband for household inconveniences associated with caring for children all day. Performing paid work as a caregiver provided more understanding from Fran's husband as he had to step over toys in the living room and peer around block structures to watch television in the evening. Being a caregiver provided justification and rationale for building the big climber in the back yard and decorating the playroom. Fran says that "when I babysat, it added some validity to it." and "there's more understanding in it". Caregiving gave Fran permission to do and have many of the things she wanted for her own children and in this way supported her in her work as a nurturing mother.

Fran's Cloth of Mothering and Caregiving

When I imagine the metaphorical cloth that might represent Fran's experiences of mothering and caregiving, I visualize a textile that is thick and that functions much as a mantle which provides protection. Fran's cloth is warp faced since the mothering fibers dominate yet the weft threads of caregiving serve to help strengthen and enhance the cloth by justifying many of the things she provides for her own children as well as the children in her care.

Her cloth is dense with the threads that serve the purpose of protecting and is created from different kinds of fiber. These represent the many ways that Fran tries to protect her children. Also present in Fran's cloth are fibers that are shiny and alluring and which represent her attempts to attract friends for her children. Some threads are strong and resilient and serve the purpose of shielding her children physically. Some threads are soft and serve to ease her children's emotional hurts. Cloths woven of different fibers such as Fran's are ridged or nubby. They are not uniform or smooth.

Sometimes the threads in Fran's cloth break as a result of tension. At this time, the loose threads are tied together and knots can been seen. The knots provide a visual record of the strategies Fran has employed as caregiver in her attempts to protect her own children. The knots represent the ways in which Fran has attempted to keep the threads tied together and to combine mothering and caregiving. These knots appear throughout the cloth and have been consciously constructed. They are planned, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes well in advance and to help keep the cloth together. The knots in Fran's cloth may even represent the ways in which being storied as a caregiver has permitted Fran to live her desired story as a mother.

There are also places in cloth where the weave is open. The open spots occur when Fran's attempts to be a good mother have not turned out as she had planned. These places between the threads suggest that even with the best of intentions, Fran believed that she had failed to protect her children. Open spaces also occur in Fran's cloth when the caregiving weft threads do not interlock with the weft. They pass over several warp threads and result in what is called a skip or float in weaving. These are the times when her mothering warp threads and caregiving weft threads do not weave together smoothly, like when a child in her care was hurting her children. These are the places where stressors occur in Fran's cloth. In her caregiving work Fran took care so that the floats did not reach impractical lengths or cause the cloth to unravel. When caring for a child who was having a negative impact on her own children, there came a point when Fran decided to stop offering care to that child. In weaving, long floats are acceptable only on non-functional cloth and the cloth of mothering and caregiving is one that needs to be functional. When Fran eliminated the child who was the cause of stress, it became possible for the mothering and caregiving threads to be woven without floats once more. This resulted in a more stabilized and a more practical cloth.

Despite the spaces, knots and unevenness, Fran wove a cloth that proved adequate for her needs most of the time. She found ways to combine the work of a mother with the work of a caregiver. She wove her cloth such that two of her priorities were met: the need to protect her own children and her need to justify expenditures on her children.

Chapter 5

Shauna

Shauna's Story

Shauna and I were introduced by a mutual friend. We first spoke on the phone when Shauna called me to express an interest in becoming involved with my research project. My friend's recommendation was followed by a, "Oh, you'll like her. You two will get along just fine."

The first of our three meetings together took place at my house one morning after Shauna had dropped her children off at school. Since both of us had children who came home at lunch, we knew that our time for this interview was going to be limited to a couple hours. Just before noon, Shauna would have to leave to go pick up her children at school and my youngest daughter would be walking in the door. We sat on the couch in my family room, drank tea and began our conversation together.

Shauna described herself as a "stay-at-home" mother. She has a daughter named Erin who is in grade two and a son named Michael who attends kindergarten four mornings a week. Although Shauna formerly cared for two sisters in her home, she no longer provides full-time family day care. She still babysits three school-aged children before and after school. As Shauna thought back and spoke about her caregiving experiences, I began to understand the circumstances that had lead her to providing child care. I also learnt why she decided to switch from offering full-time, day long care to caring for children before and after school. Shauna began her story by talking about the period in time after her first child, Erin was born.

Shauna took maternity leave when Erin was born and when it was nearly time to go back to work, Shauna began looking for child care. Her visit to a local, commercial day care contributed, she says, to her decision to seek family day care for her child:

> ...I went and checked out one day care in our area. I walked in and I didn't get a good, warm, fuzzy feeling, nothing like that. Nobody came to see what I was doing. I stood there for probably 5 or 7 minutes and finally someone came and was talking to me. I didn't even walk through whole day care to check it out or anything. And when I left the building I had tears in my eyes and I thought, "They're not getting my baby". I just wouldn't have, not for anything, have left her there. And I think that's why I went to a day home.

Shauna found a private day home provider who cared Erin for approximately a year but when her son, Michael was born, Shauna left work again. She stayed at home with her two children for a year before returning to her job. When she went back to work, her children were cared for by the same family day home provider as she hired to care for Erin before Michael's birth. At this point, Shauna's boss asked her to consider taking some time off and suggested that she return to work when business got busier. Shauna said that she might have considered the option of taking time off but she really wanted part-time continuing employment and her boss was not willing to consider this arrangement. It was then that Shauna decided, "that was it". She left the job even though when she announced this to her boss, he became more willing to look at job sharing. Shauna had already made up her mind. She and her husband had decided that they were willing to manage on his salary.

Shauna laughed as she describes the process of adapting to living on just one salary:

> I'm very glad that I stayed at home but it was a change. The first little while you get the unemployment insurance and you have a savings account. And the next thing you know, you're not getting the UIC but you still have a savings account. And the next thing you know, "Oh, we don't have a savings account." And then you learn to live on one salary.... I guess if we would have figured it out that we could live on one salary earlier, we'd be in a much better situation.

And so, Shauna stayed at home with Erin and Michael which eventually led her to become involved in providing family child care. I wondered if having Erin in a day home had been the impetus for Shauna becoming providing care for other children but it did not happen that way at all. A neighbor who had a second child after the birth of Shauna's son, asked her if she would be interested in babysitting for her a couple days a week while she was on shift work. Shauna agreed to do so and began her family caregiving work by looking after two children. She provided care for Morgan, 2 1/2 years old and Jenna, 6 months old as well as her own two children Erin, age 4 and Michael, 2 years old. Because her neighbor's employment involved shift work, Shauna cared for Morgan and Jenna two days each week and for eleven hours a day. The two days she babysat differed each week. In addition, every three weeks, her neighbor worked a weekend shift when the children stayed home with their father and this gave Shauna a break from her caregiving responsibilities.

The days were long. Morgan and Jenna were dropped off before 7:00 a.m. and were picked up by 6:00 p.m. Shauna remarked that things worked out well most of the time. During the time that Morgan and Jenna were in her care, Shauna was very involved with all of the children:

> When I babysat kids, even though it was at my home, I felt my job was looking after kids. So that's what I did. I didn't do my laundry or my dusting. I didn't do whatever. I'd make supper and still get that ready but I didn't do my housework. I looked after kids. We read stories, we played games, we went for walks, we flew kites, we went skating, you know, we did things.

As Shauna spoke, I envied her ability to concentrate her attention on the children during the days she provided care. I told her I used to say that I would like to be at home with my children at "someone else's house". That way I would not be drawn into doing laundry and housework when my children were awake and wanting to play. However, because I worked part-time, my days at home were the time when there were household chores to be done. I did not want to ignore my children on my only days at home with them. I knew what I should be doing, yet there was so much to do both at work and at home. I often stayed up late at night to attend to housework so I could focus on my children during my time at home. I tried, when I could, to separate my work as a mother who played with her children and a mother who did housework. It has been and continues to be a challenge for me.

Shauna tried to separate her work as a mother and her work as a child care provider. She made sure to get her housework done on the days when she was not babysitting so that she could direct her attention solely on the children when she was caregiving:

> When they [Jenna and Morgan] were there that was my job. It wasn't just being at home. When my kids were at home, I didn't play with them as much as I did when I was babysitting. When I was babysitting, that was my job. When I was at home with my kids, my job was also doing the dishes, my job was also doing the laundry, my job was also washing the floor. And I didn't do that when I had them [the other children]. We made things, we made lots of crafts.

It was important to Shauna that she focus on the children when she was a caregiver. So, while the four preschool children were at home with Shauna, it was like one big play date:

> Morgan would sometimes play with Erin because Erin was the oldest and Morgan was the closest to Erin. But she'd also play with Michael because they also had a number of similar interests being the same age. And Erin would play with Jenna because Jenna was like a doll. So yeah they all played together. You were never sure who would play with who. Sometimes it would be sister and brother or sisters or–it was a play date. It was. An all day long play date.

Shauna's children looked forward to the days when Morgan and Jenna came to their house. Shauna believed that the part-time nature of the care she provided made the children's time together special rather than being a burden. She said that her children enjoyed having Morgan and Jenna at their house as permanent playmates. Caring for the two sisters was a good experience for Shauna's children and rarely seemed to cause problems.

When there were problems, they usually arose between the two sisters in her care. Jenna, the youngest, passed through a stage when she pinched, bit, scratched and otherwise directed most of her wrath at her sister. Shauna felt helpless to have much of an impact on Jenna since the child was only in her care for a couple days a week. There were infrequent times when Shauna's children became the victims of Jenna's scratching but Shauna said that if her children were being hurt constantly like Morgan was, she would not have agreed to have cared for the sisters as long as she did.

Other potentially disruptive situations that Shauna remembered involved the manner in which the children adapted to the routines and rules while they were in Shauna's home. For example, one day Morgan danced on the coffee table. Other days Morgan wanted snacks throughout the morning instead of eating breakfast. However, since Morgan and Jenna were only in her care for two days a week, "it really wasn't such a big deal. Maybe if I'd had them five days a week, it would have been different." said Shauna.

The situation started getting complex as the children got older and most of them were going to playschool and school in addition to being in Shauna's care. When Michael was in playschool, Shauna had to be conscious of scheduling her duty days (days when she had to be at the playschool to help the teacher) when Morgan and Jenna were not in her care. Shauna had to arrange and juggle her schedule to drop off and pick up the children:

> I would drop off Erin first, because she started first. And then I would drop off Morgan and then Michael started [play school] at nine. And this was all between 8:30 and 9:00, dropping the three of them off. It wasn't

> all that good for Jenna because she was the youngest but Michael was in playschool, Morgan was in kindergarten, Erin was in grade one. Morgan's kindergarten was done at 11:15, Michael's playschool was done at 11:30, but they were housed out of the same school. And then we had to go and pick Erin up. She was done at 11:15 also, so she would have to stay there later with the teacher or a parent until we'd come and pick her up.

Shauna commented, "It was busy, but it was do-able." She managed to get the children to and from school. However, the situation became more complicated when Shauna also began caring for two other children before school. When Erin was in grade one, Cathy and her brother, David became part of Shauna's caregiving family when a friend needed care for her children. Cathy was in grade one and David was in grade three.

Shauna dropped off these two children and Erin at one school and because they were together, Shauna felt better about having them there a few minutes early. Morgan was the next to be dropped off at her kindergarten in another school and then Michael was dropped off at playschool. Jenna and Shauna would then go home and play until lunch time pick up began. Sometimes it felt like Shauna had just gotten home from dropping the children off when she had to go out again to pick them up at lunch time.

Shauna recounted her morning's journeys taking children to and from schools and I was fascinated at how mothers make things work. Her stories brought back memories for me of driving my oldest daughter to kindergarten and my son to playschool only to turn around in what felt like minutes later to pick them both up again. The worst part was that the baby would finally fall asleep just as it was time to get back in the car. As I told this to Shauna, she *laughed and added, "And then there's potty training. That wasn't too fun either!" and described having to rush back home for clean clothes for one of the children before resuming her morning's chauffeuring duties.*

Despite the fact that Jenna's and Morgan's parents felt it was fine for Shauna to drive the children to and from school, they did not like them to be taken any other place in Shauna's car. This put a damper on some of the trips to parks and other playgrounds that Shauna would have liked to have taken with the children. Shauna did take Jenna grocery shopping once in a while even though she did not have the sense that Jenna's parents were really in favor when she asked them of this was alright. They reluctantly agreed to let Shauna take Jenna to get groceries. Even walking excursions out of the confines of the backyard seemed to meet with some reluctance on the parent's part. Shauna observed that they seemed to be uncomfortable with activities that took place beyond Shauna's house and backyard. She felt that these kinds of restrictions limited her freedom and her children's freedom to explore new places.

However, it was another impingement on her freedom that lead to Shauna's decision to stop caring for Morgan and Jenna after having done so for 2 1/2 years:

> S: A lot of the playschool parents would go to the community league right across the street. And they started an aerobics class and they hired a babysitter but they [Jenna's and Morgan's parents] didn't want me doing that. They didn't want her with a babysitter. So I've never done a morning program because her days weren't always the same every week.

ML: So you couldn't get involved in that sort of thing?

S: No. And that's actually why I finally quit babysitting their kids. Because I just didn't feel that I had a lot of time. Now that Michael was in kindergarten I was starting to have a bit of time--and they were very upset. Very. But, you know, I feel better. I do. I don't regret it.

Shauna could not enroll in an aerobics course and this lead her to decide to stop providing child care to Morgan and Jenna. Shauna said that she wanted more freedom than she was able to have while caring for her neighbor's children.

Despite ceasing to provide care for Jenna and Morgan, Shauna still continues to provide out-of-school care. At present, in between dropping off and picking up four children at school and her son at kindergarten, Shauna is beginning to have a little time for herself. Because Michael goes to kindergarten from Tuesday through Friday, there are four mornings a weeks when she does not have any children in her care. Shauna commented that she is still busy and sometimes it does not feel like she has a lot of time for just herself. She runs errands, plans birthday parties, and volunteers at her children's school.

Because Shauna values freedom for herself and her children, she has been reluctant to provide care for a child in Michael's kindergarten class. The child has health issues that limit her mobility and test her strength. Shauna is worried about the limitations this might impose upon her and Michael. She does not believe that they could continue going on bike rides, take leisurely walks, or drive to the park:

> She's had many operations and you'd have to give her medications at certain times and she's really weak. To go for a walk around the block, you'd have to take a stroller or wagon because she couldn't do it. Michael learned to ride his bike last summer so it's–we can't wait for spring to go for bike rides and to do all this stuff. She would need someone for the beginning of April and that would be the time that we would just be getting our outdoor freedom and I don't think I'm willing to give that up and have the responsibility.

Even though her freedom has become more important to Shauna as her children got older, she speaks fondly of her caregiving experiences. Shauna has enjoyed the children in her care and they seem to have enjoyed their time with her. "It makes you feel good when a child smiles or gives you a hug." she says. And even today when Shauna sees Jenna in the neighborhood, the little girl runs to her and gives her a hug. These close relationships with the children in her care have lasted. Even though she has had many positive experiences with providing full time care, Shauna has found that babysitting before and after school has permitted her to meet her financial needs, yet at the same time permitting her the freedom she did not always have when she provided care on full days.

Shauna's Narrative Threads

There are two dominant threads which appear in Shauna's cloth: threads which free her and threads which tie her down. Shauna's desire to be free and flexible are threads that are woven throughout her stories of mothering and caregiving. The freedom to choose how to spend her time was an important reason for leaving work to stay at home with her children after her son was born. This thread appears throughout her caregiving stories and emerges again at the end of her story when she makes the decision not to care for the children whom she had cared for two and a half years. There is also a continuing thread in her caregiving narrative that focuses on the flexibility that being a part-time caregiver has provided to Shauna and her family.

Being Free as a Narrative Thread

Shauna's narrative cloth was dominated by the threads of freedom even before she became a paid caregiver. The opportunity to remain home with her children became possible when her employer asked her to take some time off during a slow time at the office. This gave her the freedom to decide to stay at home with her children. If her boss had not made his request, she said that she would likely still be working. "I believe everything happens for a reason." said Shauna.

Even though it was difficult for her and her husband to adjust financially, nevertheless they managed to living on one income. "I guess if we would have figured out that we could live on one salary earlier, we'd be in a much better situation." Having Shauna at home full-time was something that she and her husband valued and had wanted for their children from their births.

Multiple freedom threads run through Shauna's narrative about her work as a paid family child care provider. Caring for her neighbor's children just two days a week gave Shauna some freedom during the rest of the week. Even though she babysat Jenna and Morgan for up to eleven hours a day, Shauna still had time to recuperate on the remaining days when they were not in her care. In fact, part of the reason that Shauna decided to accept the responsibility of caring for Jenna and Morgan was that it was only for two days a week. Providing care on a part-time basis permitted her to maintain some freedom by having three other days of the week available to her and her children. Part-time care also allowed her the freedom to provide extras for her family and home if she wished. "That's how we're getting our bathroom done. And that's how we got our trailer. That's why we have no debt." For Shauna, the ability to obtain these extras for the family validated her at home status. The money she earned contributed meaningfully to the operation of the household and the welfare of her family.

Before Shauna and I even spoke of freedom as being a possible thread, she was using this word to describe her need not to be confined or limited. On one of our visits together Shauna said, "I don't need a whole lot of freedom, just a bit is good." Shauna values the freedom which resulted in time to explore the outdoors with her children. She shared with me her memories of being outside all the time as a child. This love of nature continues. Her photo album showed pictures of children in the back yard of her home and beyond. There are photographs of them at a city park, enjoying the kiddy pool in the backyard, and on camping trips. Shauna liked to have freedom from restrictions or structured time so she could pursue being outdoors. "I'm a do-er. I like to go.", she says.

Shauna admitted that her freedom was limited when she cared for Morgan and Jenna. Driving the girls to school was permissible and, in fact, was a necessity since their school was not within walking distance. However, the girls' parents did not want them going in the car with Shauna to parks and playgrounds. Inability to explore other places limited Shauna's ability to "just go". Shauna said that she missed this when Morgan and Jenna were in her care. I looked at the picture of Shauna and the children she now cares for after school at Shauna's brother's farm on a recent romp. Shauna commented that these children's parents, as opposed to Jenna's and Morgan's parent, were okay with explorations and outings. "They are do-ers too." she explains.

It was not just being able to drive the children to parks and playgrounds that effected Shauna's sense of independence. Morgan's and Jenna's parents were not even comfortable when Shauna and the children left the backyard to explore a short distance down the street. Wonderful trees stood at the end of the alley near Shauna's house and Shauna thought that despite the fact that Morgan and Jenna's parents did not say anything, they disapproved of the children playing there, even when they knew the children were closely supervised.

> The children loved those trees. They'd walk in and out of them and they'd make a pretend fire out of twigs. They played there for a good hour. So we'd walk down there every day, rain or shine. We'd just sing songs as we walked down there, "Mr. Sun", if it wasn't very nice out. They just loved that but I don't think that the parents really liked us playing in those trees in the alley.

Shauna sensed the parents' disapproval and even though she still continued to take the children there to play, Shauna felt restricted.

Shauna also felt somewhat restricted when her son, Michael, started playschool. She had to make adjustments which permitted her to care for Morgan and Jenna and at the same time allowed her time to go to playschool and help the teacher. While Shauna was very willing to make changes to accommodate her neighbor's rotating shift work, it did not seem that they were willing to make adjustments to accommodate her needs. For example, Shauna was interested in joining an aerobics class in the community and could not do so because she did not have the same two days free each week. Her neighbor was not willing to let Jenna stay in the babysitting service provided at the community hall while Shauna exercised for an hour. When her independence was jeopardized this last time, Shauna decided not to provide care for Morgan and Jenna any longer. "That's, I think, why after two and a half years of having these other children that I finally--I think I'm done. Because you don't have freedom with other people's kids." Even though this was a hard decision, in retrospect it is one that Shauna says she is glad she finally made. She was just beginning to have some time to herself with Michael in kindergarten and she liked it. "I've become selfish now that I know we can survive on one salary.", Shauna said.

Shauna sought freedom not only for herself, but also for her children. When she declined the offer to care for the little girl whose health was frail, she was aware of the constraints that caring for this child might have on the activities she and her son liked such as being outdoors and going on bike rides. The little girl's mother had needed care by spring and "...that would be the time when we would just be getting our outdoor freedom and I don't think I'm willing to give that up."

Shauna provides care only before and after school right now and when I asked her if she thought she would go back to providing full-time care during the day in the fall while both of her children were at school, she initially responded by saying said "No." It was not something she would want to do on a full-time basis again. In the future, she said she might consider part-time babysitting jobs, however I wondered how this might impact on her independence. Shauna explained that if she were to babysit on a part-time basis, it would be unlikely that she would also have to go back to work outside the home. The narrative threads of freedom in Shauna's cloth appeared again and they are woven with the threads that tie her down. Providing care for other children means that she loses some of her freedom yet at the same time, it also means that she is free to be at home and has the freedom that money can buy. This reminds me again that life is messy and complicated and that it is sometimes about trade-offs. There is the trade-off which permits the freedom to be at home with your own children while accepting the limitations associated with caring for other children.

Being a Part-time Caregiver as a Narrative Thread

For Shauna, providing part-time care enabled her to compartmentalize her work as a mother and as a caregiver. Shauna described being completely involved with other people's children on the days she cared for them because she felt that her caregiving job demanded it. She played games, went for walks, flew kites, and read to the children. Shauna showed me photographs of the children in a variety of dress-up clothes, hiding in big boxes in a play room full of toys, and of them running through the sprinkler. Not only was she fully involved with the children she babysat, but being a caregiver gave her permission to be immersed in her own children's activities on those two days a week as well. Shauna said that focusing on her children while she cared for Jenna and Morgan meant that she did not have to feel as guilty when she had to attend to the rest of her mothering duties, such as cleaning, washing clothes, and running errands on the other days of the week.

While her children watched a movie, Shauna attended to chores on the days she did not babysit. She was able to reconcile this because they did not watch any television while Jenna and Morgan were there. Part-time caregiving also meant that Erin and Michael were always excited when the two sisters were at their house. Shauna described it as "one big play date". Had she cared for Jenna and Morgan full-time, Shauna surmises that her children may have tired of their company.

Being storied as a part-time caregiver also meant that Shauna was not exhausted all week long. On the days between caring for Morgan and Jenna, Shauna had time to recoup her energy. She said that caregiving for full days each week would be physically overwhelming. Furthermore, she said that she could not imagine having to use weekends to attend to all of the other work of mothering such as cleaning and shopping that full-time work as a child care provider would mean. Part-time work gave her flexibility.

Providing part-time care also offered Shauna the opportunity to attend to her own needs for socializing with her friends. Shauna said that when she worked full-time outside the home, she did not like to pick Erin up from the day home and then hire a sitter to care for her at night when she curled. For her, it did not feel right to be away from her child all day long and then to go out in the evening. However, when she was at home during the day, she felt less guilty about going out in the evening. For example, one of the evenings I called her, Shauna had just been out to the theatre. She had been able to enjoy her evening out because she had been at home for the children during the day.

Like Shauna, I am aware of limiting the time I spend out in the evening when I have had to work late and have not been at home after school. Even as my children have grown older and seem not to need me as much, I still feel guilt if I am away too many evenings in a row. I wonder where this guilt comes from? Is it inherent in attempting to be that good mother? Is it an *over-reaction to spending lots of time at home alone after school as a child myself? Even though as a child I relished my time alone and I believe that I became very independent because of it, I also recall envying some of my friends whose mothers did not work and who were home after school for them.*

Being at home for the children during the day was very important for Shauna. She shared memories of being at home alone after school and recalled that she got into lots of trouble then, especially when she became a teenager. Because of this, Shauna believes that it is important for her to remain at home as her children get older. She said that if she goes back to work outside the home, she recognizes that a negative result might be that she will not be a physical presence in the home during the day. That is why, she explains, that offering family child care again looks appealing even though it would be at the cost of some of her freedom.

For the most part, Shauna viewed providing part-time care as positive and as a way to meet her needs but it also frustrated her. Part-time responsibility for Jenna and Morgan meant that Shauna had only limited influence on their behavior. For example, Shauna felt that she did not have enough time with the girls to have any impact on how they behaved, especially towards each other. She felt helpless to make any changes with respect to Morgan's aggressiveness to her sister. When she cared for the girls only a couple days a week, she did not feel like she had the authority to discipline them. Shauna realized that with part-time care also came part-time influence and responsibility. This was different, she said, from a summer babysitting job she had as a teenager. At that time, Shauna worked for a family five days a week caring for their children. She commented, "When you are there all week, you take over the parent role." As a mother when

Shauna worked in the office and her daughter was in a family day home, Shauna said that she felt that Erin's caregiver had more influence over her daughter than she did because she was with her full-time.

Shauna's Cloth of Mothering and Caregiving

Without examining it closely, the cloth that represents Shauna's mothering and caregiving might seem be one in which the weave is balanced. At first glance, the mothering warp threads and the caregiving weft threads may seem to be equally visible on the cloth with neither set of threads dominating the other. On closer examination, Shauna's cloth seems to take on a patch work appearance with sections that are weft-faced representing the days when Shauna focuses on her caregiving responsibilities. They are separate and compartmentalized just like Shauna's mothering and caregiving responsibilities. One week a month Shauna did not babysit for Morgan and Jenna at all and this is where there are even larger spaces in her cloth between grouping of threads. The spaces in between the crammed caregiving threads occur when Shauna has time to attend to some of the other mothering chores. The spaces in between represent the time Shauna required to get this kind of work done and still feel like she had attended to the needs of her children on her caregiving days. The spaces in between also represent freedom from the guilt associated with trying to care for her home and still attend to her own children.

The cloth created when Shauna combines mothering and out-of-school care has threads that are not as thick and overwhelming as those representing the care Shauna provided for Jenna and Morgan. This section of her cloth is characterized by being a light and airy casement cloth. Here

Shauna found small pockets of time which permitted the freedom to attend to her own needs when children were in school as well as to attend to the household chores. While this section of cloth provides Shauna freedom, it is also a very delicate cloth and may not be quite as sturdy financially. It may not support Shauna and allow her to remain at home much longer. She may need to reinforce it by adding more weft, caregiving threads. When this happens the resulting cloth will not be as light and airy nor permit her as much time for herself.

When Shauna is a caregiver, the cloth becomes weft-faced to represent how she compartmentalizes her work as a babysitter and focuses on the children. "I felt my job was looking after kids. So that's what I did." However, when she is not caregiving, the mothering threads dominate. This is the time for Shauna to focus on the work of mothering. The mothering threads are not of a single color--they are dyed with the many hues of mother's work. The colors represent all the tasks of mothering--attending to children's needs, doing laundry, making meals, and cleaning. When these threads combine, the colors muddy because performing all the tasks of mothering make it hard to also focus on one's own children at the same time. Muddying has the potential to bring guilt. However, Shauna's guilt seems to be minimized because she is able to attend to her own children fully when she is caregiving. Preparation of her family's supper was the only task connected to mothering that Shauna did while she was caregiving.

When the weft threads of caregiving are too taut as a result of pressure from parents, the appearance of the cloth is affected. The increased weft tension creates puckers. The cloth takes on the appearance of seersucker when mothering and caregiving do not easily combine. The tensions and puckers in the cloth result from the restrictions that parents placed on Shauna while she was a caregiver. The puckered cloth with tight weft threads was not as flexible, it could not be easily stretched. There came a point when the weft threads became too tight and finally broke after 2 1/2 years. This was when Shauna decided no longer to provide care for Morgan and Jenna. The final breaking point is reflected in Shauna's words: "That's it. I'm done." The threads had been pulled too tightly and they could not withstand the pressure.

The plain weave sections of the cloth of Shauna's life are embellished by tucking silk threads under some of the warp threads. This inlayed embroidery represents the ways that receiving money for caregiving enriches the quality of life of the family by allowing Shauna and her husband to pay their debts, purchase extras, and enhance their home. The inlayed sections are not large. They do not overwhelm the cloth but they provide some decoration and variation just as the small sum that Shauna received for babysitting Jenna and Morgan add to the household income and provided extras. The ends of these threads are tucked back into the fabric just as the money is tucked back into the family. The extra money is used to embellish Shauna's cloth rather than to make up the fabric of the cloth itself.

While cramming and spacing represents the part-time nature of the care Shauna provided for Morgan and Jenna, clipped floats also represent the part-time nature of Shauna's caregiving duties. Because of the sporadic timing of this caregiving, the floats are not spaced evenly. There is space in between the floats for mothering work. The floats are long to represent the long tangled days that Shauna cared for Jenna and Morgan. It was fortunate that there was space in between floats which permitted time for recuperation. This was beneficial for Shauna because it afforded her time in between caregiving days to attend to other mothering work and it is also beneficial for her children so they were not bored with having Jenna and Morgan at their house so often.

Shauna's cloth is not as complex as Fran's narrative cloth in which stories of caring for many different children over the years are told. It is, however, a distinct cloth all the same. It is a cloth that changes as Shauna moves from offering sporadic, part-time family child care with long hours to out-of-school child care for a few hours each day.

Chapter 6

Victoria

Victoria's Story

I had a sense that Victoria and I were going to enjoy each other's company from the moment I walked into her house. There was warmth and openness about her that made talking to her very relaxing and easy. Her story flowed as she recounted her caregiving experiences and reminisced about all the families and children with whom she had made connections over the years. We laughed a lot during our meetings together. It came as no surprise to me that she is someone who has formed some very close relationships with children and families in her twenty-odd years of caregiving.

Twenty-two years ago Victoria arrived in Canada from Great Britain with her friend, Irene, on a 12 month work visa. Victoria was hired by the Smith family who had a 9 month old son. As a nanny, she lived with this family and provided child care and housekeeping services. Victoria remembered her arrival in 1978:

> The couple I was going to work for came to the airport to pick us up and I'm still friends with them to this day–I couldn't have picked a better family, they are just wonderful. And they have adopted me, along with my friend, and my husband and kids as my family grew. We're just part of their family and it all started from the day they picked me up at the airport.

To Victoria it seemed as if the Smith's had adopted her. To this day, they celebrate holidays together. Victoria's first connection with this

Canadian family was a strong one. Her relationship with them quickly grew, but when the Smiths moved unexpectedly to Calgary after about 9 months, Victoria decided to stay in Edmonton. She was comfortable and did not want to move to a new city. When her visa expired a few months later, she returned to Britain.

Because of the close bond formed between Victoria and this family, Margaret Smith, her son, and her grandmother came to Britain a few months later to visit Victoria. During the visit, the grandmother had a stroke and their stay was extended while Margaret tended to her. For 6 weeks they stayed with Victoria in her parent's home. When Margaret and her son to flew back to Canada, Victoria and her mother cared for the grandmother in their home for another 6 weeks. When their patient was well enough to travel, Victoria accompanied her home and has lived in Canada ever since. When she arrived back in Canada, Victoria did not go back to work for the Smith's because they were still in Calgary. She did, however, stay with Margaret's mother and father-in-law until she found another job as a nanny in Edmonton.

This time, Victoria worked for the Read family who had three young school-aged children. She stayed with them for 2 1/2 years. It was a stressful job because the parents were not getting along very well. Victoria comments that the parents...

> ... had no communication. I was kind of stuck in the middle of it. They just wouldn't come home. The one wouldn't tell the other one what they were doing and I'd be like. Even though they were really nice people--I got along great with them--but they wouldn't take advantage of me if they realized it. It was more they did it to each other.

There were times when Victoria felt as if she was holding the family together. This was because she assumed all of the household responsibilities including grocery shopping. "I'd go for milk and bread. The nanny was buying their food!" Yet there seemed to be little resentment in Victoria's voice as she told the story of her time with this family. Rather, there seemed to be sadness. Eventually, Victoria moved on. Although the family broke up and the mother moved out of the province, Victoria has still remained in touch with the children.

Being so involved with this family was stressful for Victoria and she began to look for work elsewhere. Since she was tired of being a nanny, she began working at a day care center. Victoria obtained this job through a friend of hers who was already employed at the center. For 3 years, Victoria cared for the toddlers in the day care before deciding to work in a different setting. Friends have always been important connections for Victoria and her next job, in a store, was one that came through the friend who had flown to Canada with her.

Victoria married and when she had her first baby, Kira, she left the job at the store and stayed at home. During that time Victoria provided care for the child of a friend:

> I'm just remembering a little boy I used to babysit--I used to look after him but I never thought of it as babysitting. It was helping out a friend. There was no money involved or anything like that. I've done that for years with her, with all her kids. She had four kids and every time she went in hospital, I was babysitting her kids. Even when I was babysitting [other children], she'd come to the door and four kids would appear. It was quite the busy household.

It was a year later when Victoria's son, Caylen, was born that she said she officially began offering family child care from her home. The children, 4 year-old twins, were related to the Smith family for whom Victoria had nannied when she first arrived in Canada. As Victoria commented, "Everyone I babysat for was friends. Or friends of friends." The twin's parents were divorcing and the mother was working shift work, so Victoria babysat the girls 3 days a week. The hours Victoria cared for them varied but it was never in the evening.

Her home was busy with the 4 year-old twins and her own children, Kira, who was 2 years old and Caylen who was a baby. However, it was soon to become busier. Victoria also began to care for the son of a friend as a favor when his mother returned to work. Her friend's son, Stephen, was 2 1/2 years old when he began to come to Victoria's home for part-time care. Stephen's brother, Nick was also cared for by Victoria during the summer.

With these latest additions to her caregiving brood, there were many children in her home. Despite that, Victoria thought that her own children had fared well:

> My kids were fine. I think because they were young and didn't know any different. It wasn't like they had to get used to other kids. I'm sure if you would ask Kira, she wouldn't remember no kids being here. There have always been two. There's always been kids so I don't think it was hard for my kids. I think if they were older children, it might have been harder but at that age. I was always caring for somebody. Even if it was just a friend who dropped in "Could you have my kids while I went out?" So I don't think my kids--it was nothing to them.

Victoria's friends must have thought that she coped well also because another friend of a friend, approached Victoria and requested full-time care for her daughter, Deanna and out-of-school care for her son, Justin. At the time Victoria felt that she had enough children to care for so she declined but when this mother came back a few months later with the same request, Victoria agreed to take on the added responsibility. This was the beginning of a long friendship between Victoria's daughter, Kira, and Deanna.

> They were like sisters. Five days a week--like sisters. And if you asked my daughter, Deanna had always been in her life because Deanna was about two and a half when she came to me. So they don't have any memory of not being there.

Deanna became like a family member during the 8 years Victoria cared for her. She spent summers with Victoria's family and even accompanied them on family vacations. Victoria remembered that Deanna called her "Auntie Victoria". Then all the children in her care began to refer to her in this way. "I had a title." she said. "I didn't want to be called Mrs. Donnelly....And even my kids would say at times 'Auntie Victoria'. I think they got more attention that way." We both laughed as she recalled this detail.

Deanna had been a part of Victoria's family for a long time and it was difficult for Victoria and Kira when the parents divorced and Deanna and her mother moved to Calgary. Kira and Deanna still correspond but not as much mail seems to be coming back from Deanna lately. A recent gift that Kira sent to Deanna had not been acknowledged and this saddens Victoria. The girls had been so close, it was hard to lose this connection.

Victoria developed close relationships with many of the children in her care, yet she described her work as a caregiver as being a job as opposed to simply providing casual care for her friends' children:

> Well, I really looked at it as a job. I mean I got up in the morning, I would get up ahead of time, before my kids would get up and I would exercise and shower. I would never answer the door to anyone in a dressing gown. I would be completely dressed and ready for the day. My lipstick on, if I wanted. So I looked at it as a job. And my husband used to say "You're crazy." I would never run to the store and leave him with the kids. They were my responsibility. I never did anything like that.

Because she believed that caregiving was similar to having a job in the community in terms of responsibility, and, perhaps, because of her background as a day care worker, Victoria said that she ran a fairly structured program for the children who she cared for in her home. There was a little black table in Victoria's kitchen with six chairs around it. The children could eat snacks and play with Gak, Goop and Playdough. Victoria got roll ends of newsprint from the newspaper companies which she spread on the kitchen floor for the children to color on. On nice days, she taped it to the fence in her backyard so they could paint on it. The children were not put in front of the television except on occasion for what Victoria called "an educational show". A scheduled nap time each day meant that all of the children had an afternoon sleep, or at least, rest. Victoria said this provided her with time for herself to rest or to clean up after lunch. On many afternoons, Victoria recalls having circle time with the children or taking them for walks.

Victoria's experience in day care had an impact on the way she set up the program for them and it also impacted her decision to stay at home with her own children. She did not want her children to experience being in day care.

> V: We made that decision that I would stay home. It was a major decision in our lives. We didn't want them getting looked after by other people--by the likes of me [she laughs]. And day cares. I actually used to threaten my kids with day cares. I'm awful. I remember saying to Kira, "Yeah, I'll just throw you in day care." And she used to go, "Oh, no." She never knew what day care was.
>
> ML: But it must have been really bad if you were going to throw her there?
>
> V: "I'll just throw you in day care." "Oh, no, no mommy, don't throw me in day care."
>
> ML: So, it was your experience in day care that made you decide not to do that?
>
> V: Yeah, it probably was. I used to feel sorry for the kids. Particularly the babies. Though all the people who worked there were very loving and the day care I was in was an exceptionally good day care, it was a really good day care. And even that I wouldn't have wanted for my own kids. No. There was a lot of good workers and very dedicated people when I worked there. And all qualified, I think I was the only one who

wasn't qualified. They all had their early childhood and stuff, they were well qualified.

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ML: But that wasn't what you wanted for your kids, was it?

V: No. Definitely. I could remember when I was working with the toddlers, I'd be walking past and there would be a little baby sitting on the rug crying and I'd pick him up and take him with me to the toddler side because I'd say "Oh, look at him. Nobody to hold him." And it's not fair. Your kids are going to cry at home and you can't pick them up for every little thing, I know that, but it's just...

Victoria wanted to be able to comfort and guide them herself. Even though there was a short period of time when Kira was a baby when she was cared for by a friend while Victoria worked part-time, day care was not what Victoria wanted for her children.

When Kira was about 3 years old, Victoria thought that Kira was getting "too clingy". Victoria worried that Kira might find it difficult to separate from her when it came time for school. To ease Kira into becoming comfortable with being away from her, Victoria enrolled her at a playschool which she attended a couple days a week. This decision did not come without implications for the other children in Victoria's care and for Victoria herself. As it turned out, Victoria was able to convince the parents of Deanna and Stephen to enroll their children in the same playschool program. Victoria worked duty days during which she helped the teacher in the playschool during classes and clean-up days (when parents met to clean the playschool) for herself as well as for Deanna's and Stephen's families.

As I marveled at Victoria's willingness to work extra duty and clean up days at playschool, I remembered my willingness to be responsible for driving my children's friends to and from camps so that my children would be with someone they knew. I am reminded of the myth of the all-giving mother as we all told our stories and wondered when, and if, there would be time to focus on ourselves.

Enrolling the children in playschool had been Victoria's suggestion and since Deanna's and Stephen's parents were working full-time, Victoria felt that it was fair for her to assume these responsibilities at playschool. "I was always at the playschool" she exclaimed but luckily she was able to take Caylen with her.

There were other times, though, when Victoria did feel taken advantage of by the parents of the children in her care. Sometimes parents arrived late or stopped off to shop before they picked up their children. Victoria spoke about these situations somewhat philosophically:

> I hated to be taken advantage of because I would never do that to somebody. I wasn't always getting money off everybody. But even the people I was getting money off, I know they were paying me and I looked at it as a business, but I still think some of them abused me. And I think that's not a bad thing. It's life. They got comfortable and they'd come late or they'd call and say, "I'm coming late." Some kids would end up having supper with us, too. So stuff like that. So I think that the hardest part was probably with the adults. And that was the same in the day care, too. I loved working with the kids. The adults used to do me in.

Throughout the time that Victoria offered family child care, her step-son came in and out of her life when his mother dropped him off in exasperation. He lived with Victoria and her husband periodically and, just as he was adjusting to his life with them, his mother would arrive and take him away again. Victoria wishes that they could have arranged to have him live with them permanently. Now that he is an adult, he is in their lives again and this has made Victoria happy.

When Caylen started kindergarten, Victoria thought that she would like to stop caregiving and get back into the workforce in some other way. It was then that she got an offer that was hard to refuse. She was asked to care for a child, Megean, who was 3 years old and Victoria was offered a large sum of money with one stipulation: Megean's parents, who were friends of the family Victoria first nannied for, requested that she care only for their daughter and not babysit for any other children.

> I said "no" to Megean initially. The mom phoned me up and I told her I was getting out of it. And she said, "Margaret had told me you were getting out of it. Listen to me." And it was money. They paid me very well. So she said, "We would pay you so much. Then you wouldn't have to go to work and you'd be around for your kids." They knew me well enough.

At that time there was only Deanna in Victoria's care in the morning, at lunch and after school and Victoria was not willing to give up caring for Deanna. Megean's parents agreed to this arrangement. Victoria spent her mornings with Megean and, in the afternoon, she often took Caylen and Megean out. This was something that she had been unable to do previously because she did not have a vehicle with enough seats to accommodate all the children in her care. Instead, with many children, Victoria used to take them on walks to the park and ravine.

Megean changed schools when she began to attend kindergarten and her mother was working less, so when Victoria said that she did not want to provide child care in the summer, things worked out. With her own children in school, Victoria was less inclined to continue full day care although she still cared for Deanna.

> I always had Deanna. Deanna, to me wasn't babysitting. She was part of the family. I never looked at her as a job. Like she would, actually over the years, she would get heck like the rest of my kids, whereas the others wouldn't. They would get told things were wrong and get disciplined like that but no, she would get that. And it's funny because she used to say to me, my daughter used to say to me, "Don't tell anybody. But your mom is like my real mom. I love that your mom is my real mom." No, Deanna, I never looked at it as a job and it got to the point where I never took money for her anymore at the end. Because she was just here after school and stuff.

Victoria did not take money for caring for Deanna because she became part of the family just as she did not charge a fee for caring for some other children. The son of one of her friend's was in her care for over a year before she started receiving compensation. Victoria discussed money:

> And I used to spend a fortune on food. Money wise I don't think--I used to be out of pocket in the end. Because the food you needed and

> everything. I would buy crafts and all that stuff. All that costs money, the supplies--it [the money] just kind of went into the family pool. It was just needed. I think we spent more than I actually made. Especially in the later years with Deanna. Going out and going different places like the water park. Paying for kids to get in places. And just going to buy six ice cream cones would be expensive. But no, the money wasn't put away. It just ended up in the family pool.

It was only when Victoria looked after Megean that money became a motivating factor. Victoria babysat for friends and friends of friends and she said she likely spent more money on supplies and food for the children than she made. What was important to Victoria were the many close relationships that developed between her and the families for whom she provided child care. Victoria summed up her experiences saying,

> They were all good people. I must say that everybody I babysat for became good friends.

Victoria's Narrative Threads

In the stories that Victoria shared with me, there were two threads. The predominant one was woven into her stories even before she became a mother and a caregiver. This thread spoke of being a friend. The other thread that appeared in Victoria's stories related to being a professional caregiver.

Being a Friend as a Narrative Thread

Woven throughout Victoria's narratives about mothering and caregiving were threads that described friendships. Being storied as a friend lead to close relationships between Victoria and the families for whom she cared. It meant that Victoria helped out other people who were her friends. While there were benefits that Victoria enjoyed as a result of being a friend and being connected to others, there were also costs for her when she felt "taken advantage of" as a caregiver.

Friendship threads wind through Victoria's stories. They appeared even before she became a mother and a caregiver. She made quick and close connections so that Margaret was comfortable visiting her in England even though Victoria had only been their nanny for a few months. When Margaret's grandmother had a stroke during their visit to England, they stayed with Victoria and her mother for 6 weeks until Margaret had to return home. Amazingly, Victoria continued to care for Margaret's mother another six weeks before she accompanied her back to Canada. Victoria went beyond responding to a friend in need. She quickly became a part of the family and assumed family responsibilities. While these might be considered encumbrances, they served Victoria very well and remain important parts of the connections she has maintained.

Margaret, who started off as an employer, became a good friend and then a welcoming family member for Victoria and her family over the years. Victoria spoke of feeling like she has been "adopted" by Margaret's family. Twenty-four years after Victoria first came to Canada to work for Margaret, they still spend holidays together. This year it was Victoria's turn to "do Easter" at her house. Victoria had truly become a part of Margaret's family and Margaret a part of Victoria's family.

Friends have always played an important role in Victoria's life as a mother and as a caregiver. Being storied as a friend meant that Victoria developed many close relationships. Not only is she still closely connected to Margaret and her family but is also still close to almost all of the children and families for whom she has cared. Victoria still gets pictures of the twins she first babysat many years ago and they exchange presents for birthdays and holidays. Deanna became part of Victoria's family and accompanied them on family vacations. Being called "Auntie Victoria" by Deanna and the other children speaks to the closeness of the relationships between Victoria and the families in her care. The drawback of having these close relationships results when families she has been a part of split when parents divorce. Parents in two of the families have separated and the children have moved away. Victoria told of their situations with sorrow and regretted that she was in less contact with these families than she had been in the past. It has been hard that communications between Deanna's family and Victoria's have been sparse lately. Forming very close relationships built a sense of family for Victoria but there is a sense of loss when these ties are broken.

As a friend, Victoria helped out the people she knew and cared about. With the Reads, she became the person who held the family together. She picked up all the pieces when the parents stopped communicating. She took over all the household responsibilities when they came home less and less frequently. As a friend, Victoria cared for her friend's child and did not charge her. Victoria helped this friend out each time she went into the hospital to have another child. She cared for Stephen and Justin because they were the children of a friend from Scotland. Victoria believed that was what friends did.

Except for Margaret's family, all of the children Victoria has cared for were connected to friends in some way. The twins' mother was related to Margaret's family. Deanna's mother was a friend of a friend and Megean's parents knew of Victoria through a mutual friend. Victoria has never advertised or sought out families for whom to babysit--they have all approached her, even when she no longer wanted to provide care for other children.

Being a friend has been advantageous for Victoria. She always knew something about the families before she became their caregiver because she was introduced to them through friends. Friends have not only arranged jobs for her as a caregiver but also for other jobs as well. Her job at the day care came through a friend. Her work at a retail outlet was secured in this way. When Victoria worked in at the retail outlet, her daughter, Kira, was cared for by a friend.

Victoria's friendships have also often meant that she was taken for granted. When Victoria was caring for the Read family there came a point where she had enough. She assumed too much responsibility for the children, the household and even for the parents. "That's why I quit." she said. Sometimes when Victoria assumed too much responsibility, it was the result of a conscious decision. When Victoria wanted Kira to go to playschool, she offered to do all of the duty days for the other two children in her care as well as for her own child. Victoria said that this was something that she did not mind doing.

Other times Victoria felt taken for granted occurred when parents did not come to pick up their children right after work. They would sometimes go shopping on the way home thinking that Victoria did not mind. Victoria's explanation was that "they got comfortable". Many times children ended up at her home for supper at the end of the day. Sometimes the parents who came late were parents who Victoria did not even charge for looking after their children because they were friends.

Even though Victoria realized that she likely spent more money than she took in, she did not feel comfortable taking money from the families for whom she provided care. For example, Victoria cared for Nora's son for a year before she began accepting money from her friend. Before that, she offered the child care as a favor to a friend. Victoria cared for Deanna for eight years and as Deanna became more like a family member, Victoria stopped taking money for her out-of-school care. Victoria even ripped up the cheques that Deanna's mother tried to give her as payment for child care. It did not feel right to Victoria to accept money for Deanna's care because she was a friend and a part of the family even though expenses were increasing as the children got older.

Being a Professional Caregiver as a Narrative Thread

Despite being storied as a friend and part of the family, Victoria looked at her work with children as a job, albeit, an unpaid one at times. She conducted herself as a professional caregiver and made sure that she was ready each day for the children in her care. She always got up early to exercise, dress and be prepared when they arrived. Victoria said that the children were her full responsibility because child care was her job. She did not expect her husband to watch the children in her care when he was at home, even if she needed to do a quick errand. Instead, Victoria waited until the weekends to attend to her tasks.

Victoria was committed to serving the children a hot lunch because she thought that this was important. Victoria set up her house to accommodate children by putting up hooks at the door, by having a child-sized table in the kitchen for meals and activities and by purchasing supplies to make crafts. She made playdough, Gak and Goop with the children and only permitted them to watch Sesame Street on television because it was educational. Victoria said that she ran a program with the children and structured it in a similar way to a day care with scheduled stories and nap times. She commented was she did not think that parents were aware of all the activities that she did with the children, however it was important to her to do so.

Victoria's Cloth of Mothering and Caregiving

The cloth of Victoria's mothering and caregiving is one that has stretched over twenty years. Long before the mothering threads were visible at all, the caregiving threads were present. Thick, strong caregiving weft threads represent the substantial ties that Victoria established from the beginning with the families for whom she provided care. These long threads run throughout her cloth and almost all are still intertwined even when she is no longer a family's caregiver. Because of the close relationships that Victoria formed with the children in her care and their families, Victoria's caregiving threads became enmeshed and securely intertwined in the weave and gave Victoria great satisfaction, a sense of family and belonging. They also are threads which restrict at times.

The basket weave might best represent the combination of friendship and caregiving which is both satisfying and restrictive for Victoria. In the basket weave, the weft threads are doubled up and this can result in less distortion in the cloth. This, however, did not always seem to be the case with Victoria. There were times when the combination of friendship and caregiving resulted in more distortion rather than less as parents became too comfortable and took advantage of Victoria by arriving late to pick up their children at the end of the day. Distortion in the cloth sometimes resulted in puckers and uneveness as some threads became pulled too tightly.

Despite occasional puckers, there were also golden threads that embellish the fabric. These golden threads differ from the golden threads in Shauna's cloth that represent the way extra income embellishes the family income. For Victoria, these threads speak of the many wonderful relationships that have formed between her and the families who sought her caregviving. They have been golden ties that have enhanced Victoria's family's lives and they have benefited Victoria, as families she has cared for, have adopted her and her family.

There are occasional floats that appear randomly and for varying lengths. These warp floats speak of the appearance and disappearance of Victoria's step son from her life. Regardless of the length of these floats they end suddenly to reflect when the boy's mother took him back into her care. Most of these threads are black, the color of mourning, because Victoria's one regret has been that she did not petition for custody of this child. More recently, these threads have brightened in hue as her step son has re-entered her life as an adult.

There are many portions of the cloth where warp and weft floats arranged around a small plain weave form raised squares with sunken centers. When such a cloth is taken off the loom the yarns contract to form honeycombs (Sutton, 1982). This kind of cloth is traditionally used in blankets because of its ability to insulate against the cold. So too, do Victoria's friendships insulate against the cold. Having left her homeland twenty years ago, the families Victoria cared for have insulated her against loneliness.

They have provided the warmth of an extended family. To this day holidays are celebrated with Margaret's family who picked Victoria up from the airport on her first trip to Canada as a nanny. These threads serve the purpose of comforting and create as sense of belonging.

Even though these threads are comforting at times, on other occasions the weft threads are thick and cumbersome. They add extra weight to the cloth even though they are functional. It benefited Victoria to have the other children in her care in the same playschool as her daughter, Kira. At the same time, the additional responsibility of doing other parents' duty, snack and cleaning days, added an extra weight to Victoria's caregiving work.

Twill is a firm but flexible cloth. It drapes well. Because more threads can be packed into a twill than a plain weave, this cloth has weight and substance (Sutton, 1982). The twill weave is seen in Victoria's cloth. It is firm and structured as was Victoria's caregiving practice. She had a specific routine she liked to follow and planned aspects of their day to simulate a day care schedule. The draping quality and substance speak to Victoria's professionalism in her caregiving practice. She was always ready for her day as a caregiver and focused on the children while they were in her care. She saved her shopping trips for after the children had left for the day.

The fibers that represent Deanna's presence in Victoria's life are ones that are long and continuous. Though they started out as weft, caregiving threads, they became closely entwined with the warp mothering threads as Deanna became a part of her family. There even came a point when Victoria did not charge to care for Deanna any more. The caregiving threads had become so enmeshed with the mothering threads that it was hard to see where one started and the other ended. When threads are enmeshed, they are close together and result in a dense weave. The long, thick cloth of

Victoria's mothering and caregiving has provided warmth in her life. It has permitted her to be at home with her children and has provided her with many friends and family.

Chapter 7

Discussion

In this chapter, I describe the nature of each woman's narrative threads and portray them visually. I then discuss the mothering threads which run through the narratives and finally the caregiving threads and stressor nodes.

Gathering the Threads

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I presented the narratives of mothering and caregiving as told to me by Fran, Shauna and Victoria. All three women are mothers who stayed at home with their own children and provided paid child care, yet their stories and cloths are unique. I described what the cloth of mothering and caregiving might look like for each of them. Yet, despite their uniqueness, there are also threads that all three stories share. I used threads and weaving as metaphors to attempt to depict these mothers' experiences. To further understand their experiences of mothering and caregiving, in this chapter I have attempted to visualize the threads that weave each woman's cloth. In Figures 1, 3 and 5, I have depicted Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's mothering threads. Figures 2, 4 and 6 represent each woman's caregiving threads. When, for example, Fran's caregiving threads (Figure 2) are superimposed upon her mothering threads (Figure 1), what results is the cloth that represents her experience of combining mothering and caregiving.

When I drew the cloths to represent each woman's stories, I noticed that there were common threads that appeared in each. For example, each mothering cloth was woven upon a colored background (I chose yellow) to represent the all the work of being a mother. This yellow background is a solid color because being a mother is on-going and includes work that needs to be addressed on a regular basis such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping. All women who are mothers have such a cloth. Upon that background are deeper yellow, warp threads running lengthwise to represent staying at home to mother one's own children. Green threads depict the caregiver's children.

Each cloth also contains weft threads that are red which symbolize paid caregiving work. Purple threads portray the money each woman derived from caregiving and how she put it to use. Black circles depict stressor nodes that result in tension when certain threads intersect. Broken threads sometimes appear when threads have been pulled too tight. When this happens, threads are sometimes pulled together and tied with knots. The knots represent strategies that are employed to tie threads back together. Blue threads represent friendships formed with the families for whom these women provided care. Despite these common elements, the texture, thickness and strength of individual threads and how they are woven affect the final web as evidenced by the distinctive appearance of Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's cloths.

Visualizing Fran's Threads

The threads that represents Fran's mothering (see Figure 1) are thick and yellow. These yellow threads form a helix around the green threads which represent her children whom Fran attempts to protect from emotional and physical harm. Fran's mothering threads sometimes dominate the green threads. There are stressor nodes in the places where the mothering threads intersect with the threads that represent Fran's children, especially when she believes that her children do not appreciate her attempts to help them. The

Note: All figures have been adapted to black and white for microfiche purposes. Refer to original manuscript for color figures.

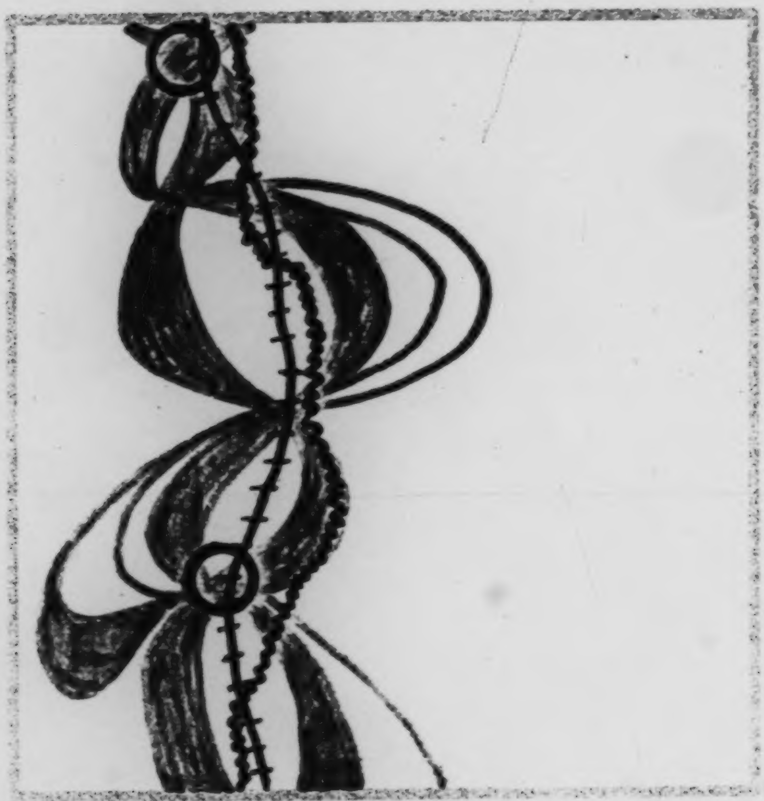

Figure 1. Fran's Mothering Threads

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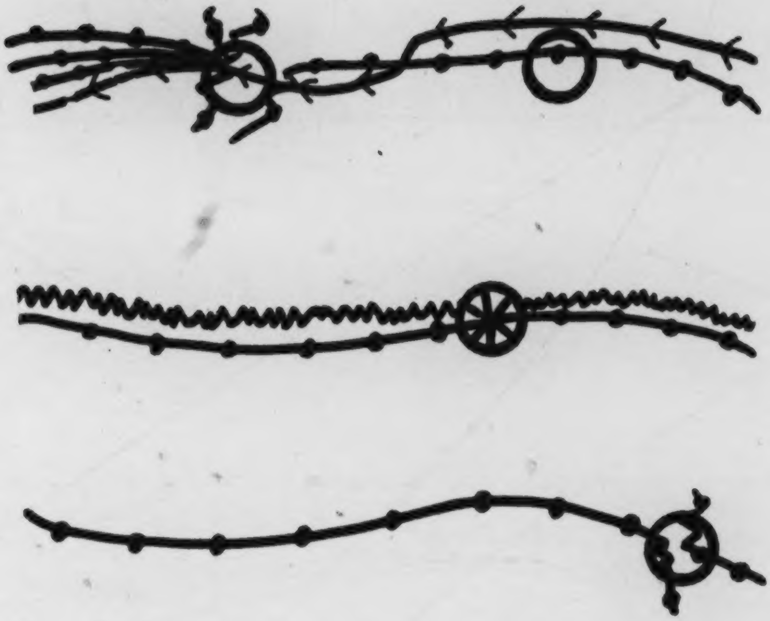

Figure 2. Fran's Caregiving Threads

Legend

mothering
her own children
her friendships
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paid caregiving
stressors

purple threads that represent money received from caregiving support the weft mothering threads and benefit the green threads which portray Fran's children. They reinforce Fran's ability to be a good mother by providing her children with bigger and better toys and equipment. They also represent the justification for the work Fran does as a caregiver and a mother.

Figure 2 depicts the threads associated with Fran's caregiving. There are red, weft caregiving threads which represent the number of children for whom Fran has provided care over the years. In some places, there are many red threads to signify the times when Fran has had too many children in her care at once. The blue friendship threads run through this grouping of red threads because Fran has sometimes had a hard time saying "no" to friends' requests to care for their children. These times cause tension for Fran which is represented by the black stressor node. Because of this tension, the red caregiving threads have been stretched too far and have broken. More stressor nodes appear when the caregiving threads are superimposed upon the mothering threads (lay Figure 2 over Figure 1). These nodes occur at the places where yellow mothering threads and the broken red caregiving threads intersect to portray the times when mothering and caregiving threads do not intertwine easily. Stressor nodes also appear when caregiving, mothering and her children's threads intersect. At these times, Fran has had to tie knots or employ preventative strategies to tie the threads back together as represented by the red lines converging in the center of the stressor node. The purple wavy threads symbolize money earned for caregiving. They are earned as part of the caregiving threads but are utilized to enhance both the caregiving and the mothering threads. When mothering and caregiving threads are woven together, the resulting cloth is thick. Both the warp and weft threads serve the purpose of protecting and supporting her children, however the yellow mothering threads dominate.

Visualizing Shauna's Threads

In contrast to Fran's dense, thickly woven cloth, Shauna's cloth is comprised of threads which are woven to form a cloth that is lighter and airier (see Figure 3). The yellow mothering threads and green children threads intersect to portray Shauna's decision to be at home with her children. Purple threads signify where Shauna utilizes the money she receives for caregiving. They are not specifically woven back into the caregiving threads or into purchases for her children but are designated for household extras.

Figure 4 depicts the threads associated with caregiving. Thin red lines represent Shauna's out-of-school caregiving responsibilities. The thicker red threads represent her long, but sporadic days of caring for her neighbor's children. The spaces in between the intense caregiving threads represent time Shauna has to recuperate and to focus on the other mothering tasks such as cleaning and laundry. In the center of the thick red caregiving threads are dense yellow mothering threads to signify the concentrated attention Shauna is able to give her children on the days she is caregiving. Most of the stressor nodes are found near the concentrated caregiving threads. Some originate with the restrictions placed by the parents of the children in her care upon Shauna's freedom to be involved in her own pursuits. Others occur when caregiving and her children's green threads intersect and their freedom to come and go as they wish is restricted. Stressor nodes also emphasize the times when money, caregiving and friendship intersect. They portray the discomfort Shauna feels at having to negotiate wages with parents who are also friends. While Fran's purple

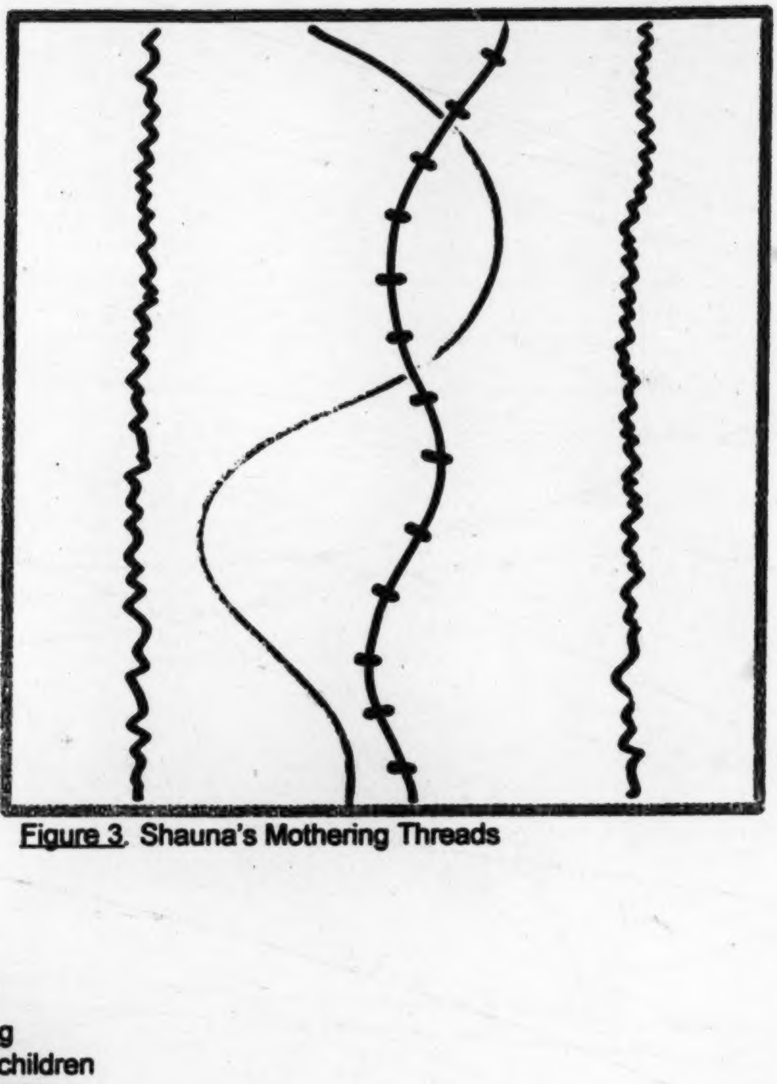

Figure 3. Shauna's Mothering Threads

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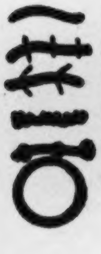

mothering
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stressors

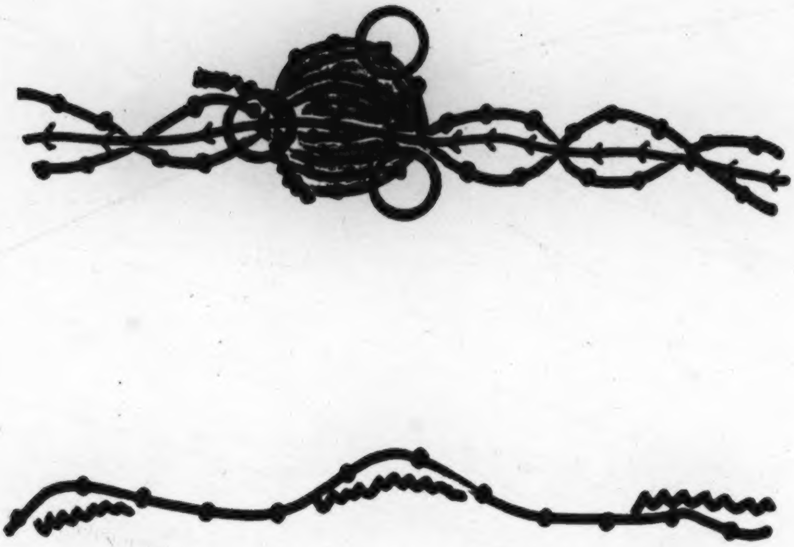

Figure 4. Shauna's Caregiving Threads

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mothering
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her friendships
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paid caregiving
stressors

threads are long and appear at fairly regular intervals, the threads which symbolize monetary compensation for Shauna are intermittent. These threads are woven with the warp threads just as the money is woven back into the family to provide for their needs and wants. The purple threads are continuous on the mothering web because Shauna is able to work the small amounts of money she received from caregiving into large benefits for her family. At the bottom of the cloth, as Shauna decides not to provide care for her neighbors and to just focus on out-of-school care, there are no concentrated red caregiving threads and the ones that are there, are loosely woven. There is more freedom for Shauna in this portion of the cloth and consequently fewer stressor nodes.

Visualizing Victoria's Threads

Victoria's mothering threads (see Figure 5) are dominated by friendship threads. The arrows at each end of these threads signify that the friendships Victoria have go way back and continue to endure over time. These blue threads intersect Victoria's mothering threads as she mothers her friends' children. They also intertwine with her green children's threads as they come to consider friends as family. Victoria's yellow mothering and green children threads intersect to depict her decision to remain at home with her children. The broken green line intersects with the mothering threads when Victoria's step-son is in her life. Stressor nodes appear when the green lines are broken and his mother comes to take him away from Victoria and her husband.

Even Victoria's caregiving threads (see Figure 6) include dominant thick blue threads of friendship. The continuous red caregiving threads weave in and out of the blue friendship threads as families Victoria cares for become

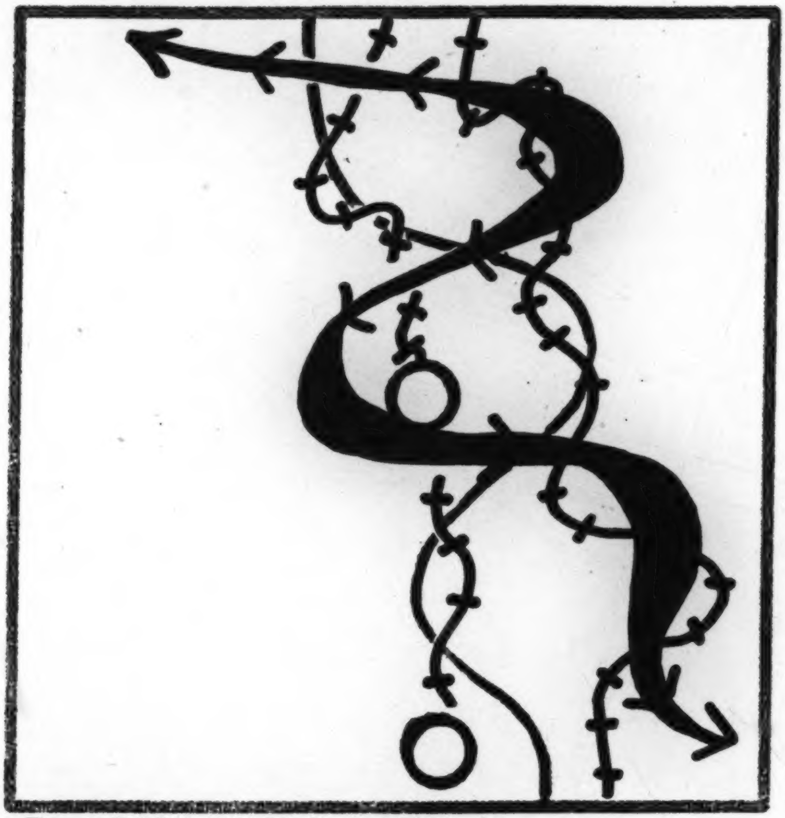

Figure 5. Victoria's Mothering Threads

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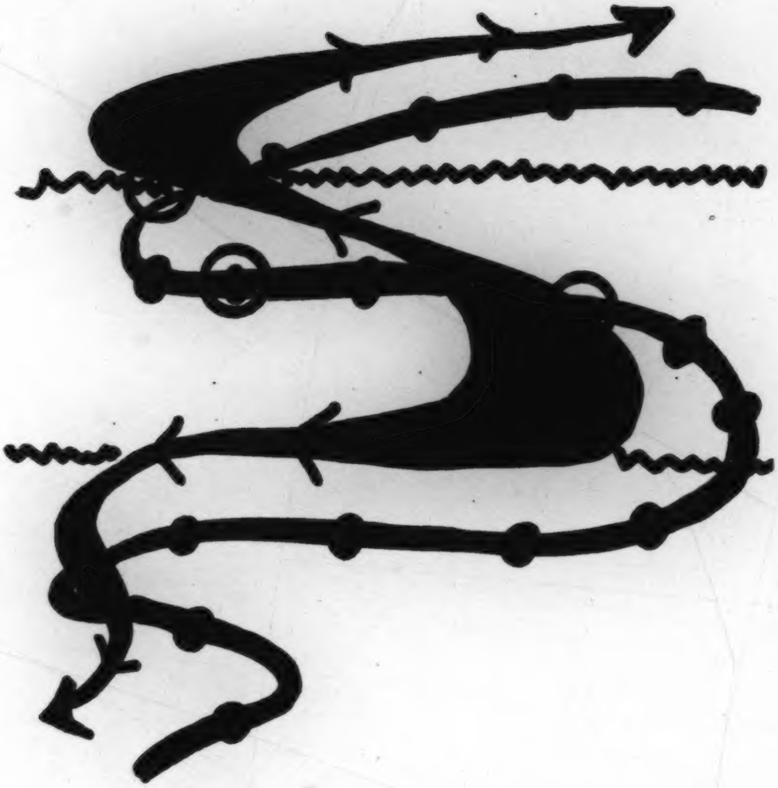

Figure 6. Victoria's Caregiving Threads

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mothering
her own children
her friendships
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paid caregiving
stressors

friends. The caregiving threads are long and represent the enduring ties Victoria makes with those for whom she provides care as well as the length of time they remain in Victoria's care. The red caregiving threads are also thick to represent the preparation and planning that Victoria puts into her caregiving. The purple threads which symbolize money received for caregiving disappear when they intersect with the friendship threads. Victoria does not charge friends for caregiving and stops charging when the children become part of the family. Purple threads are found only on the caregiving web. They do not emerge on the mothering cloth at all because Victoria says she probably spent more than she made from caregiving.

In as much as friendships are a source of comfort and support for Victoria, they are also sometimes a source of tension. When friendships and caregiving are woven together stressor nodes appear to represent the occasions when Victoria felt that friends might have taken advantage of her generosity. Stressors are also found where caregiving, friendship and money threads intersect. Like Shauna, Victoria experiences discomfort when she has to discuss money. Additional stressors occur when the mothering threads are combined with the caregiving threads (lay Figure 6 over Figure 5) as mothering, caregiving and her children's threads intersect when Victoria works duty days and cleaning bees for other parents at the playschool so that her daughter can go to playschool.

Learning from the Visual Portrayals

What do these visual narrative cloths tell us about women's' mothering and caregiving? By laying these three cloths side by side (see Figure 7), it becomes even more evident that each woman has experienced staying at

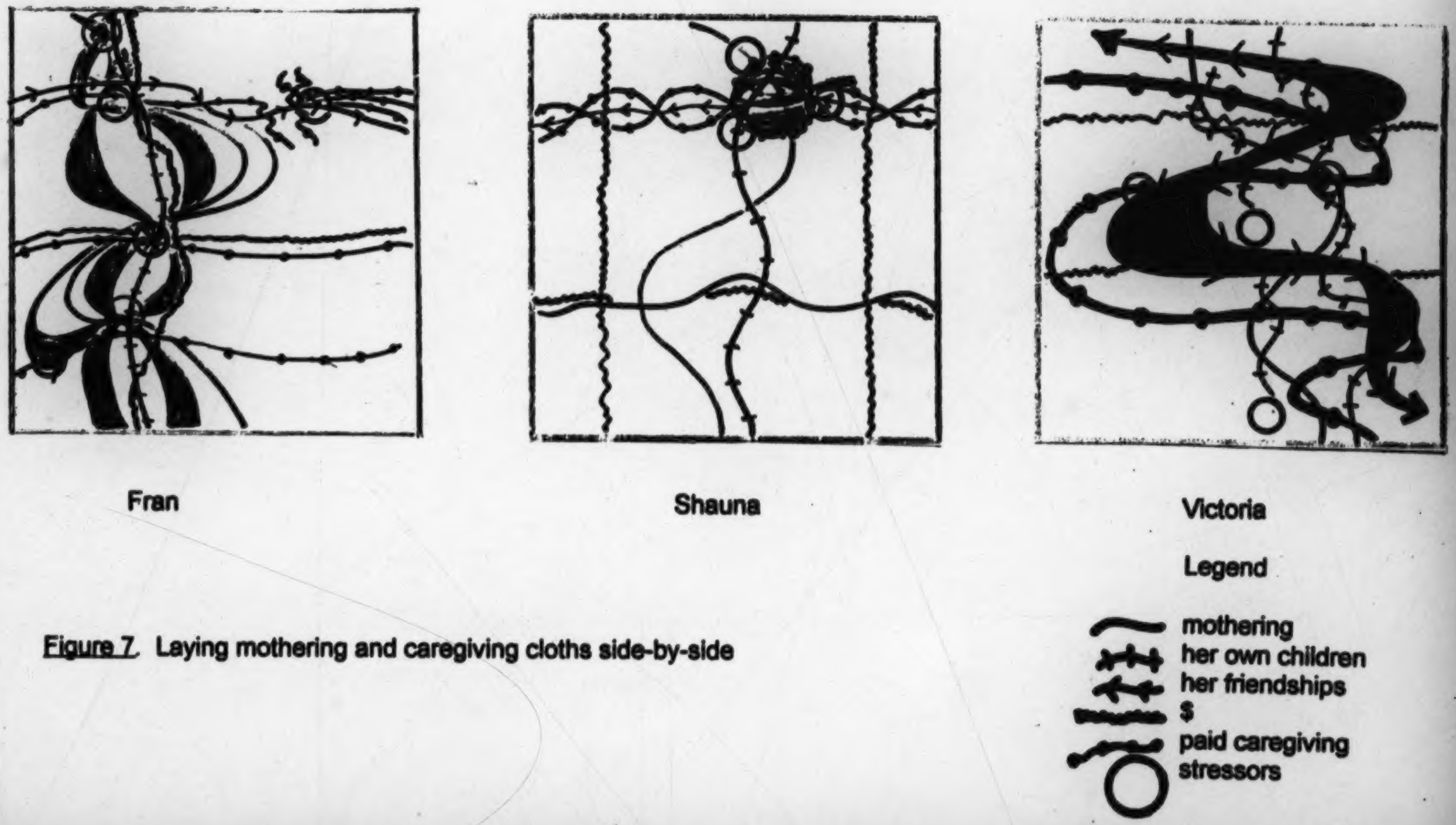

Figure 7. Laying mothering and caregiving cloths side-by-side

home with their children and providing paid childcare in unique ways. It becomes clearer that there is more than one story of mothering and caregiving. And yet, despite the different configurations of Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's cloths, they are woven of similar threads. Each woman spoke of her decision to be at home and her desire to be with her own children during their preschool years. Each told stories of how having other children in their homes impacted their own children. Each discussed the part that friends played in their caregiving work and the benefits derived from providing paid childcare. In addition to the positive aspects of combining mothering and caregiving, Fran, Shauna and Victoria have also begun to discuss some of the more complicated aspects of their work as mothers and caregivers--the aspects that result in stressors. For each woman, different threads intersect to create unique stressors. What can be learned about mothering and caregiving from the ways the threads in each of their cloths are woven?

The Mothering Threads

There are two dominant mothering threads. Threads that speak of each woman's desire to remain at home with her children and how they got into caregiving are visible in Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's cloths. Also apparent are threads related to their own children and the impact being a family child care provider has had on them.

Staying at home.

In each of the three narrative cloths, yellow threads of mothering intersect with the green threads representing children to signify each woman's desire to be there for her children. Fran, Shauna and Victoria all described their beliefs that being at home with their children while they were preschoolers was very important. Fran and Victoria described making a conscious decision to be at home with their children. Shauna worked part-time when her first child was a baby but when her next child was born, she opted to stay at home with both children rather than work full-time. For these women, deciding to leave the workforce to stay at home with their children was an important and intentional decision.

The thickness of the mothering threads and the frequency with which they intersect with the green threads representing their own children varies. Fran spoke of a strong need to protect her children and the numerous ways she endeavored to do so. Consequently, her mothering threads are the thickest of the three women and form a helix around her children's threads as she attempts to protect them.

Closely connected to wanting to stay at home with their children is doubt about the ability of others to adequately care for their children if they went to work outside the home. Because of having worked in a day care herself, Victoria and her husband decided that they did not want their children cared for by other people. Even though Shauna's first child was cared for in an unlicensed family day home and Shauna was happy with the care there, her visit to a local day care left her crying, "They're not getting my baby." Fran confided to me that she and another caregiver joked that the only other person they would trust to care for their children would be each other. The sentiments which Fran, Shauna and Victoria described about their need to be at home with their children is also found in the literature on family day home providers. Most women who decide to provide family day care do so in order to remain at home with their children, to be fully involved with their children and to avoid the problems of finding care outside the home (CCCF, 1997; Nelson, 1990; Read & Lagrange, 1990). In fact many of these mothers cannot bear the thought of having anyone else raise their children (Nelson, 1990). Fran and Victoria's stories confirm this.

Impacting the caregiver's children.

The literature shows that, as in these women's stories, the impact of providing in-home child care on the caregiver's children varies. This impact can be positive since children have numerous playmates. However, in-home caregiving can also cause stress when the provider's children feel as if they are not getting enough attention.

Caring for other children caused distress for Fran and her children at times but it is interesting to compare her story to the stories of Shauna and Victoria. Neither of these two women described having other children in their home as a source of stress for their children. In Shauna's case she considered the days when she cared for her neighbor's children as play dates. She attributed the ease with which her children adapted to having other children in the house to the part-time nature of her caregiving responsibilities. Victoria, too, says that her children were used to having other children at home to play with because she began caregiving when they were very young.

When she cared for other children in her home, Victoria commented that she sometimes felt that she was stricter with her own children . When all of the children were doing something they should not have been doing, Victoria says that she tended to chastise her own children. They had to bear the brunt of her dissatisfaction because she did not think that it was appropriate to get upset with the other children. Nelson (1990) suggests that parents might be harder on their own children because they care so much about their own children and how they will turn out. Or perhaps they expect their own children to know better and have higher expectations of them.

Fran was able to maintain involvement with her children's school while she provided paid child care. Being in the classroom and workroom at the school was not always a positive event because she had to bring the children in her care with her. When her youngest daughter saw her playing hopscotch and having fun with one of the little girls in her care, it was a time when her good intentions about being at school for her daughter did not turn out as she had planned--her daughter was hurt and angry. Shauna managed to be involved in her children's school and playschool by volunteering to help out on the days when she was not providing care for her neighbor's children. At present, Shauna is involved in out-of-school care and is able to volunteer in her children's' school during the day when there are no children in her care. In Victoria's case, she managed to become involved in her daughter's and son's playschool when she arranged to have the children in her care attend the same preschool program. While this was beneficial for Victoria and her children, it also meant that she was doing three times the amount of work during duty days and clean up days. In the literature, it has been noted that some mothers have commented on the irony of deciding to work at home so they could be involved with their children and then being unable to do so (Glenn, Chang, & Forcie, 1994). Being involved in their children's school is important to Fran, Shauna and Victoria and they each find ways to do so within the restrictions they have caring for others.

Fran's, Shauna's, and Victoria's stories of the impact of providing child care on their own children are different. This reinforces the individual nature of experience. It would be erroneous to assume that all mothers who provide care for others while staying at home with their own children perceive the impact on their children in the same way. Perhaps factors such as the frequency and duration of child care, the age of the children cared for, and the age and experience of the caregiver make a difference on the perceived experience for the children whose mothers care for other children. This merits further investigation.

Severing close connections seems a difficult part about forming close ties with children in care for the caregiver and for her children as evidenced by Fran's and Victoria's experiences and those cited in the literature (Innes & Innes, 1984; Nelson, 1994). In fact, one of the children who was in Victoria's care for over 8 years became a part of the family and like a sister to her daughter. Now that this child has moved from the city and communication between the girls has been reduced, it has been hard on Victoria and her daughter. They appear to be grieving her loss as one might grieve the departure of a biological family member. So too, did one of Fran's children experience loss when a child was no longer in her mother's care. The close relationship that one of her daughters had with a baby Fran cared for, ceased when there were problems with caring for the baby's brother. Both Fran and her daughter missed the child they had become so attached to over the past few months. Letting go when children are no longer in care seems to be one of the costs associated with forming close relationships.

The Caregiving Threads

Becoming a family day care provider.

Neither Fran, Shauna nor Victoria spoke of providing paid childcare as a deliberate and conscious decision. However, Fran commented that she was thinking of ways to stay at home and make money when a neighbor asked her to babysit. For Shauna, the initial request for her to provide paid child care came from neighbors whose daughters had been playmates of her children. Shauna said that she was both surprised and flattered when her neighbor asked if she could take care of the girls and Fran considered it a good opportunity for her children to make friends and playmates. Victoria's initiation into caregiving came when she offered to help out a friend by informally caring for her child. Despite their slightly different initiations into providing child care, each of these women made the same comment: "there were always children in our house". It seems that it was sometimes hard for them to identify the point at which play dates ended and paid caregiving began. Similar sentiments were expressed by caregivers in Nelson's (1990) research:

> ...some women cannot point with precision to the moment at which they began to offer family day care as such in their homes. Many women started very casually. One's first clients were often friends and family members who asked for a "favor". (p. 35)

For caregivers like Fran, Shauna and Victoria, the children who were in their care were friends, neighbors and friends of friends. Only on occasion was a family referred to Fran from the neighborhood school where her name was kept as a potential caregiver for out-of-school care. Having said that, it should be noted that because of Fran's involvement with the school, she often knew many of these children and families as friends anyway. Caring for the children of friends resulted in benefits to the women because they did not need to incur the cost or effort of advertising for potential clients.

Considering family caregiving as a job.

Shauna and Victoria used similar phrases when they described family caregiving as "their job". Shauna said that she focused fully on the children in her care by providing activities for them, reading to them, and by taking them outside to play. Her photographs showed the children in dress-up clothes and playing in the kiddy pool in the backyard. Like Victoria, she discussed "being up and ready" when the children arrived at the door in the morning. Shauna's housework was completed on the days when she was not caregiving just as Victoria saved her housework for evenings, early mornings, and weekends. When Fran's children were younger, she waited until her husband came home to do a load of laundry or do some ironing.

As Fran's children became older and more independent, Fran got some of her housework done in bits and pieces throughout the time that children were in her care. Fran spoke of doing quick vacuuming while the children were outside or of doing dishes while the children played in the living room. She wanted to save the weekends and evenings for family time with her own children she said. Nelson's (1990) research indicated that most women found little time to do any chores beyond laundry, meal preparation and dish washing when children were in their care. Much like Shauna and Victoria, housework was usually done before or after the children they cared for arrived at their homes.

Allotting time to the domestic domain while providing paid child care can become a struggle for women as they attempt to meet the needs of their family and meet the needs of the children in their care simultaneously. In the case of the women in this study, regardless of when housework was completed, housework duties remained the work of the women and were not shared with their spouses. The woman was assumed to be responsible for completion of household tasks because she was at home during the day despite the fact that she was working as a caregiver. The demands of doing housework were not ones that seemed to be easily combined with paid caregiving responsibilities and there appeared to be more than one way women attempted to find balance when they were in the position of having to meet what may seem like conflicting needs. Fran did her housework after her husband came home or while the children played but did not want to use family time on the weekends to do chores. Shauna completed household tasks on the days when only her children were at home and Victoria used early mornings, evenings and weekends to do her chores.

Being a friend.

Although the threads of friendships were most visible in Victoria's narrative cloth of mothering and caregiving, they are also present in Shauna's and Fran's cloths. All three women cared for the children of friends or children who were recommended by friends. Unlike licensed family day home providers, as caregivers in the unregulated sector, Fran, Shauna and Victoria, were connected with prospective clients through informal networks rather than through an agency. Only Fran mentioned that some of the children she cared for came from a listing of out-of-school care providers at the school but most were families she already knew anyway. Each women commented that they liked having some kind of prior connection with the families for whom they cared so they knew what to expect from them and the children. They felt they avoided the surprises they thought they might have experienced if they had cared for the children of strangers who had been recommended through an agency.

Caring for the children of friends, Fran thinks, afforded her some flexibility in her caregiving duties even though she said that she found it hard to say "no" to friends' requests for caregiving services. Because she was looking after the child of a friend, Fran was able to go to an aquasize class during the day and place this child in the pool's babysitting service for an hour twice a week. Perhaps other parents with whom she did not have as close a relationship would have objected. Even though Shauna did have a relationship with her neighbors prior to providing child care for their children, they did not permit her to put their daughter in a babysitting service offered by the community league during exercise classes. Restrictions were placed upon Shauna by the parents of the children for whom she provided care which limited Shauna's activities as well as those of her children. For Victoria, being a friend lead to parents "becoming comfortable". Victoria said she sometimes had problems with parents coming late to pick up their children. Still, the benefits of having close friendships outweighed the drawbacks for her. Almost all of the families for whom Victoria babysat became close friends and some even accepted her as a member of their families. With all of her relatives living overseas, the relationships Victoria managed to build helped to fill that gap and created a family for her in Canada.

Like Fran, Shauna and Victoria, one of the most commonly related dissatisfactions with caregiving tended to be the relationships with parents (Divine & Hawkins, as cited in Atkinson, 1988). Many of the dilemmas associated with providing care seem to be connected to relationships with parents rather than with the children in care themselves. This can be compounded when the adults are also friends.

Becoming friends with families for whom the women provided care had advantages and disadvantages for them. Many of the children in their care had already been friends or were recommended by friends. These relationships resulted in some situations where caregivers, such as Victoria, felt taken advantage of by these people. Caregivers assumed that friends should not forget to pay for services rendered, should not be late with payments, and should not come late to pick up their children. Victoria commented, "I would never dream of doing to a friend what they did to me." However, because many of the families who used the services of the family day home provider were often friends or friends of friends, these situations sometimes became less business-like and problems arose.

Receiving and spending money for caregiving.

Adequate compensation and payment of child care fees were common area of concern for all three women. Combining friendship and paid caregiving seems to have created difficulties. Because she babysat for friends, it was awkward for Shauna to discuss remuneration and stand up for herself with parents when she thought she should have. Shauna first began to care for her neighbor's children to help them out. They told her that finances were tight because the husband did not get a regular paycheque. Shauna offered them two payment options: with receipts at a higher rate or without receipts at a reduced rate. These options seem to be the norm for family caregivers according to Nelson (1990) and Fran who offered a similar fee structure. In the beginning, Shauna's neighbors opted for the lower rate, however, after six months they decided that they wanted receipts backdated to the beginning of the year. Initially, they were not willing to give Shauna the difference owed her (at the rate with receipts). She says that it was an extremely uncomfortable situation. Victoria echoed Shauna's discomfort with discussing remuneration with parents who were also friends. Victoria described saying, "That's okay. Don't worry about it." when parents acknowledged forgetting to pay her. She would never mention it to them if she was not paid on time. Fran, however, became a bit more comfortable with saying, "Can I get my cheque?" when she was not paid on time. She even began to ask for payment from some families at the beginning of the month so she could afford to buy food and craft supplies without taking money from the family budget. Fran believed that asking for money "up front" reduced the problems with late payments. As she began to consider her caregiving work as a business, Fran said that it became easier for her to ask for the money that was due from parents.

Victoria and Shauna babysat for friends without remuneration as a favor. Victoria not only cared for children of friends without charge but also tore up cheques from Deanna's mother when she provided out-of-school care for her. Victoria said it was hard to take money when Deanna and her daughter were such close friends and when she had been in Victoria's care for so long. In Shauna's case, she is presently helping out a friend who is going through a divorce by taking her child a couple days a week for free until the woman "gets back on her feet."

The money that each woman received for caregiving was put to different uses in each of their families. Since Shauna and her husband had already discovered a way to live on one salary before becoming involved in paid child care, the money that she received was considered as extra. It was used to pay their debts, purchase a tent trailer and perform bathroom renovations. In Shauna's case, she took the small amounts she earned and transformed them into significant benefits that were very visible in their family. Fran described the money she earned as going "back into the business" so she could provide bigger and better equipment for her own children and the children in her care. She used caregiving to justify many child-related purchases and activities. Fran was able to defend the purchase of wall paper for the playroom, wood and paint for the outdoor climbing structure, the purchase of an above-ground pool as necessary for providing child care. Fran admitted that the underlying motivation was to benefit her own children as well. Fran acquired extras for her children at the same time which supported her perception of the expectations of her role as a good mother. Victoria, on the other hand, claimed that she likely did not come out ahead financially despite caring for many children over the years. Because she wanted to make sure that she fed children a hot lunch and provided them with craft and baking activities, she spent as much as or more money than she charged for child care.

The Stressor Nodes

As evidenced in the visualizations of each woman's cloth, stressor nodes appear when threads intersect or when they are pulled too tightly. When mothering threads intersect with the threads that represent their children, there is a possibility for stressors to occur. For example, there seems to be more potential for tension when these threads intertwined often and closely as with Fran's mothering threads. When mothering and caregiving threads intersected, stress arose for Shauna as the caregiving threads restricted her. For Fran, stressors appeared when mothering her own children and caregiving intersected. There were times when she perceived that she could not live up to her role as a protector when children in her care were hurting her own children physically or emotionally. In order to alleviate some of the stress, Fran attempted to anticipate these situations. She very consciously orchestrated routines and play times to ensure that her children's needs got met while she cared for other children. She said that her children's rooms were private spaces where they could retreat from the noise and from contact with other children. To protect her children emotionally, Fran also minimized her own involvement with children she cared for when her youngest daughter felt jealous. Nelson (1990) commented that jealousy could cause problems especially if the youngest child had to give up the status of baby in the family as Fran's daughter seems to have had to do. Other researchers claim that jealousy is minimized if the children being cared for are younger than the caregiver's own children (Trawick-Smith & Lambert, 1995). In Fran's case, a major source of her daughter's concern was that Fran was at home with another little girl while she was in school.

Shauna's freedom was restricted and stressor nodes appeared when she cared for children whose parents did not want her taking their children anywhere in her car but to school or playing anywhere but the backyard. Her freedom to take children to parks was limited when these children were in her care. Her own freedom was limited because of the sporadic timing of the days on which she provided child care. As Shauna discovered, combining mothering and caregiving can restrict the caregiver's ability to be involved in her own activities.

Intersecting caregiving, money and friendship threads has the potential to result in tension because it provides parents with the opportunity to take advantage of providers. Victoria suspected that, as parents became comfortable in their relationship with her, they started to come late and attend to their own chores before picking up their children. Shauna saw her neighbors making new purchases for their home while they were telling her they were strapped financially and unable to give her backpay in exchange for providing income tax receipts. For each of these women, discussions around late payments and amounts owed were awkward even though Fran said she was eventually more willing to talk about it to parents as she began to consider caregiving as a business.

There is potential for stressors to occur when friendship and caregiving threads intersect. Fran found this out when she could not bring herself to refuse to care for the children of friends even though she thought she was already babysitting too many children. Sometimes combining caregiving and one's own children can result in stressors when there are problems with jealousy. When the caregiver's own children were physically hurt by children they babysat, there was tremendous potential for stress.

Looking at the visualizations of each women's cloths, it seems like stressors are compounded as the mothering and caregiving threads are laid on top of each other. Combining these two kinds of work seems to have the potential to create tension as women attempt to balance their needs and their children's needs along with meeting the needs of the children in their care.

Portraying Lives--A Caution

In creating visual representations of mothering and caregiving, it is not my intention to reduce these women's lives to mere diagrams. This would be counter to my reasoning for using a narrative approach. The complexity of each woman's stories cannot be represented adequately by simple line drawings. The stories they tell provide rich details of their experiences and should not be reduced in their telling. My intention in drawing each cloth was to help me to make connections and learn from these woman's stories. Visualizing what a small portion of each cloth might look like has helped me work with the stories I was told. I hope it helps readers imagine what each swatch of cloth might look like at the point in time when the stories were told. In the drawings, it is important to remember that each line is composed of many stories. Each stressor node drawn represents a complex set of circumstances that lead to intense emotion. A black circle cannot adequately replace the richness of the stories it represents but what it can to is provide some clues about when stressors occur and which threads combine to create tension for each mother who is also a caregiver. It is important to consider these drawings as yet another way to look at the detailed stories these women told and to create further meaning.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this chapter, I revisit narrative methodology and discuss the ways that I have been able to respond to the methodological goals I identified at beginning of my research. Also addressed in this chapter are implications and directions for further research. Finally, I complete this study by going back to self to reflect upon my experience combining mothering with the work of being a student, wife, college instructor, and friend in the section entitled "Narrative Endings".

Revisiting Narrative Methodology

When I began thinking about this project and about how I wanted to conduct the research, I had in mind goals related to methodology that were particularly important to me. I wanted to listen to the participants involved in this research and to give Fran, Shauna and Victoria an opportunity to tell stories that were important to them. I wanted to validate the work they did as mothers and caregivers. I wanted to work collaboratively with them. I wanted to increase knowledge about, and understanding of, the work women who combine mothering and caregiving do. It is important to revisit discussion related to the methodological concerns outlined in Chapter 3 in order to ascertain the extent to which I reached the goals I set out.

Reviewing My Research Goals

Listening.

Engaging in this research, I was aware I wanted to listen with full attention to the stories these women were telling me. I was aware of ways to recognize what was being said by responding with acknowledgement responses such as, "uh huh" and "mmmm". I invited disclosure by asking open-ended questions rather that ones that would illicit "yes/no" responses. Because I wanted to encourage these mothers to talk about what was important to them, I began with door openers such as, "Tell me about your experiences of being a mother and caregiver." and "Talk about how all this began for you." Beginning this way, I tried to stay away from influencing the direction in which their conversations unfolded.

I was aware of my role as a listener and yet I was becoming increasingly conscious of being part of discussions. Initially, I think that I was reluctant to become involved in the conversations because I was not sure when and if I should contribute. I thought that any time I spent talking, deprived the participants time to speak. However, as time went on, I became aware that if I remained silent and noncommittal in my responses, I also risked coming across as detached and aloof which was not my intention. I learned when I shared my own experiences of mothering, there became an "us"--a joint understanding of the complexities involved in being a mother.

I reread the transcripts and listened again to the tapes of the conversations. I noticed that as I became more involved and shared my own stories of mothering and the story of this research, the women involved began to talk in more depth about themselves. They began to focus on their feelings and some of the messier aspects of mothering and caregiving rather than relating a chronological story describing children in their care. I believe I met my goals for listening by inviting Fran, Shauna and Victoria to tell stories important to them, by listening with full attention, and by sharing my own experiences.

Validating.

Because I think that mothering and caregiving have traditionally been taken-for-granted and marginalized, I wanted the women involved in my research to come out of it with a sense that their work of mothering and caregiving was important. By inviting these mothers to tell their stories in this research project, it was my hope that they would feel that their work was being recognized.

During the last conversation Victoria and I had together, I asked for her thoughts about being involved in this research. I hoped she would speak of feeling important and recognized for the valuable work she had done. She responded by saying, "I didn't give it much thought. It's a good subject and I don't think that people have looked in to it much." Shauna considered mothering and caregiving an interesting topic and enjoyed talking about her experiences with me. "It's not something that I sit down and talk about with other mothers." she said. Her frustration involved wanting things to change in society and worrying that it would not happen. "This [mothering and caregiving] is important work and yet there is no recognition. Working mothers get a tax break to send their children to day care and there is nothing for women who stay at home with their children." While Shauna enjoyed being able to talk about her experiences, monetary benefits, such as tax incentives, for staying at home to raise her children and to provide care for other children might have contributed more substantially to her feelings of recognition.

Fran, on the other hand, indicated that she began to feel validated as our conversations together continued. She said, "Wow, it made me realize that I have done a lot. I've learned how to cope--it made me feel good." Talking about her experiences made her realize how much being a family day care provider contributed to her family. "I haven't ignored my kids." she said. "I've been able to provide money for our household, I've been happy with myself, taught my kids and provided friends and a happy home."

I had hoped all the women involved in my research would have responded the way that Fran did. I had wanted them to feel like their work as mothers and caregivers was recognized. In some ways I was surprised that they all did not express these sentiments. However, I also realize that with the emergence of the feminist perspective in research, women's everyday work has only just begun to be seen as a valid topic for academic study. Given this, it is more understandable to me that the women who are mothers and caregivers might also doubt the importance of the work that they do.

Collaborating.

I approached this research with the sense that each woman knows her own experiences best and that I came into our discussions as someone who was about to learn from them. To convey this to each woman, I tried to be clear about this belief by stating it in our initial conversations. I gave participants a draft of the story I composed about their experiences of mothering and caregiving and asked for their feedback. Together we discussed changing names and details to ensure confidentiality. Together we reviewed potential threads.

It is important to remember that each women's story is but one telling of her experiences and is the result of the collaboration between us. I am present in their stories not only as a researcher but also as a mother. As mothers, we share some similar experiences. Their stories awakened some of my own memories and I aroused some of their memories with the sharing of my experiences. Because of who I am, I may not hear all the stories of mothering and caregiving that could be told. Furthermore, because Fran provided care for my children, I might hear only some of her stories and not others. I am very much an influence on this telling of Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's stories. This is why it is important to acknowledge this aspect of our collaboration and for my stories of mothering to be present in the telling of their experiences.

Increasing knowledge and understanding.

By inviting these women to tell their stories, I believe I have added to the body of knowledge about the day-to-day experiences of mothers who are also caregivers. By eliciting their stories, I wanted to go beyond the collection of quantitative data and provide an understanding of the contexts in which these women do their work. In their stories, Fran, Shauna and Victoria have delved into the complexities of being a mother and a family childcare provider. They told detailed stories that add to what is currently known about women who combine mothering and caregiving.

When Fran looked over the first draft of her story, she commented that it was good that both the negative and positive things were in it. That way, she said, people would get the whole picture and not just the good parts. Like Fran, the stories of Victoria and Shauna also address some of the messy aspects of caregiving and mothering. Each described aspects that were troublesome to them as well as aspects that were positive. There are few "Hollywood plots" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988) in their stories where everything worked out happily ever after. I believe these messy stories are the ones that can provide increased understanding and be helpful to women who might be considering combining mothering and caregiving. These women's stories provide insight into the lived experience of combining these kinds of work. These stories can help mothers enter into providing paid child care with information about what they might expect. They may be able to anticipate what might occur and utilize some of the coping strategies described by Fran, Shauna or Victoria. A mother currently providing paid child care may be able to resonate with one of these women's stories and feel comfort that she is not alone in her struggles or her joys.

For women contemplating putting their own children in care, hearing the stories of the caregiver might provide some understanding of the situation caregivers find themselves in. Perhaps a parent, who has become a friend of the caregiver, will understand that although a caregiver says "It's okay. Don't worry about it.", being late with a payment puts the caregiver in an uncomfortable situation emotionally as well as financially.

For those readers who look at these women's stories and feel no sense of connection or thread that resonates with their own experiences, there may yet be value in this research. Since one of my goals was to provide more information and understanding of women's everyday work, hearing these stories is valuable, no matter how far they are from one's own experience. They serve to reinforce the notion that there are many ways that women live their lives and that the way lives are experienced can be very different from one's own experience.

Implications for Future Research

Having spent over two years immersed in the literature on mothering and caregiving and engaged in conversations with Fran, Shauna and Victoria, I have emerged from this research with increased insight and understanding of the experiences of these individual women. At the same time, it has become clear to me that there are likely as many stories of mothering and caregiving as there are women doing this kind of work. While there are shared threads of experience, the way these threads are woven is unique. My knowledge of these women serves to heighten my awareness that there are many untold stories.

In this telling of their stories, Fran, Shauna and Victoria discussed some common topics. Each of them shared stories about how they got into providing paid child care, how they have adapted and organized the logistics of having many children in their care, how they each look at the money they receive for caregiving, and how they perceive the impact on their own children, yet their stories are distinct. How each woman has experienced her work as a mother and caregiver was different and provided insight into the individual construction of experience.

Portraying Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's experiences visually provided me with insight I might otherwise have missed. As I laid the caregiving transparency over the mothering background, I noticed the red caregiving threads changed color as they were combined with the yellow mothering background. This color transformation lead me to contemplate the impact of combining these two kinds of work. On their own, the work of mothering and the work of child caregiving are complex enough. Combining these two undervalued yet important kinds of work seems to compound their complexity even further especially when the myths of mothering (Caplan, 1989) were added to the equation. Receiving money for caregiving, which closely resembles mothering, can put the caregiver in the uncomfortable situation of having to charge for a service that good mothers should provide free of charge because they are all-giving.

Another glance at each of these women's visual portrayals of mothering and caregiving, impresses upon me how complicated they seem to be. Even in Shauna's cloth, which appears visually to be the simplest, there are many threads twisting and intersecting. Where threads intersect there is potential for additional support but also the potential for stressors. To deal with the stressors, there seem to be many logistical arrangements and strategies that these women employed. In the process of our conversations together, I heard several stories of careful planning and orchestration--of knotting the threads back together. They ranged from Fran's strategies to alleviate her youngest daughter's jealousy to Shauna's demanding drop off and pick up schedule to Victoria's time at playschool as she worked duty days for three families. I am struck with how these women make things work.

I am also left wondering if these women's stories might have been different had they been associated with a family day home agency. Could some of the stressful situations they found themselves in with parents have been prevented? In particular, better working relationships with parents regarding payment for providing child care and fair treatment might have been facilitated within the structure of a licensed family day home system. Would Fran have found herself in the dilemma of not being a good friend with the backing of an agency that enforced the maximum numbers of children permitted in a single family day home? Would Shauna have been in the awkward position of having to ask for retroactive payment in order to provide her neighbors with income tax receipts for child care? Would Victoria have found herself spending more money on expenses for providing child care than she made? Nelson (1990) suggests that the provider-parent relationship might be relieved from one major source of conflict if provider wages were paid by an agency. These issues and more lead me to contemplate directions for further research related to family caregiving.

New Directions

As I have listened to Fran's, Shauna's and Victoria's stories of mothering and caregiving, I have come to appreciate that these are but three stories out of many. In order to get a more complete understanding of the experiences of women who remain at home with their own children and provide paid child care in the unregulated sector, additional narrative research is needed to hear more of the in-depth stories of mothering and caregiving. There is a need to go beyond statistics and hear more about the daily experiences of more women in order to provide a broader knowledge-base.

Since those who provide care in the private sector have been difficult to access for research purposes, this group has tended to be even more invisible than those providing licensed family day care. Family day care providers in the private sector provide a substantial portion of the care for children and yet little is known about them (Nelson, 1990). Additional research that focuses on caregivers in the private sector is needed to increase what is known about unlicensed providers.

There has been a claim that while there are some differences between caregivers who provide child care in the licensed sector through family day home agencies and those who provide care privately, these two groups are quite similar (Cox & Richardz, 1987). There would be value in hearing the stories of women from both the licensed and private sectors to get a better sense of how each experiences mothering and caregiving. It would be valuable to find out if and why their day-to-day experiences differ. Would stressors for women providing care through a family day home agency occur in the same places as women offering care in the private sector?

The women in my research were recruited by word-of-mouth and, as it happened, were not from culturally diverse backgrounds. Research that involves women from a variety of cultural backgrounds would provide information on their experiences with mothering and caregiving. Hearing the stories of women from diverse perspectives could provide understanding of the issues, supports and stressors that occur in their lives and how they are impacted by cultural context.

The women in my research came from similar economic backgrounds. Each woman's husband was present in the family and was the major income provider. Money earned from caregiving supplemented the family's income and was not considered a primary source of revenue. Additional research on mothering and caregiving could examine the experience of women from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Research in the field of family day care, especially qualitative work, is relatively new. There is much to be explored and many stories yet to be told to get a good understanding of what these women do and how they experience their work as mothers and caregivers.

Narrative Endings

As I live my life right now, I am trying to combine my work as a mother of three children, a wife, a graduate student, a college instructor and a friend. With some guilt, I realize that there are times when I am unable to do any of it really well. As I attempt to meet all of the conflicting needs, I realize that it is not necessarily the individual pieces that make it so difficult. I think that combining these different kinds of work has made it more difficult to cope. In these last few weeks as my thesis is nearing completion, I have especially struggled to live out all my stories simultaneously. To live my story as a good student, I spend hours at the computer trying to complete my writing. At the same time, my work as a good mother involves spending evenings and weekends watching one or another of my children play softball, as well as trying to attend to other household duties. As a good instructor, I have marking and preparation work to do for classes as well as meetings to attend. I try to combine this work by taking papers to ball games to read, proof, or mark. However I cannot help but think about meeting the parent of one of my youngest daughter's teammates in the line at the grocery store last term. As we looked at each other and tried to figure out how we knew each other she said, "Oh, you are the mother who is always reading and marking papers." I felt like I had somehow done something wrong. I had been there at each practise. I was not sure why I felt so inadequate at the time because, before her comment, I thought I was handling things quite efficiently. I was trying my best to figure out a way to combine all the work that I needed to do and yet her comment made me feel inadequate. I guess a good mother would have been there and would have been fully focused on her children.

A friend of mine is a mother of three children, an instructor and a graduate student as well. When we get a chance to talk, it always seems to be about how busy we are with school, our jobs, and our families. We talk about how attending university and working would all be if we did not have all of the responsibilities associated with being a mother. We have figured out that the students who live at home with their parents probably have at least five extra hours a day to do their work than we do. The time when we are especially involved as mothers, from after school until bedtime, is time that we think other people in our classes might have to do their work as students. For those of us who are mothers of young children, the time to do school work starts after 10:00 p.m. when the last child is finally ready for bed. Late nights have been a welcomed quiet time to focus on marking and writing but they do not leave time for recuperation to start again the next day. Nelson (1990) commented that women who combine mothering and caregiving often take time from sleep time to get done all they have to do so that they can focus on children during the day. This is something I can certainly relate to as I borrow time to connect with my husband or friends and then have to stay up late to get my marking or school work done.

I share these stories not to complain or feel sorry for myself. It is rather a comment on life and the ways that I and some of the mothers I know adapt to combining all of the work we do. Somehow, we just make it happen and often, in retrospect, we wonder how we ever did it just as Fran, Shauna and Victoria wondered how they were able to handle all of the logistics involved in combining mothering and caregiving.

I also know that one of the ways I try to cope is by talking to other mothers and by sharing the details of the current story I am living. Each time I do, I also hear about their stories of trying to combine mothering and other kinds of work. As I listen to their stories I often find they are experiencing some of the same things I am going through. Sometimes their lives are even more complicated than mine and I feel some relief. Sometimes other mothers have coping strategies to share that are new to me and I benefit from their experience. I have come to realize that there is power in the telling of these stories for me. They help me figure things out. They help me get through.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Narrative Inquiry into Mothering and Paid Child Caregiving

Principal Investigator:	**Co-Investigator:**
Dr. Brenda Munro	Mary Lynne Matheson
phone number	phone number

Purpose of this research:

The purpose of my research is to give you time and space to talk about your day to day experiences as a mother who has stayed home to be with your own children while providing paid care for other people's children at the same time.

The research to date on women who have provided home-based child care for a living has primarily focused on facts and figures and answering specific questions posed in surveys. What I think is missing from these statistics is information on what it is actually like to do the work of mothering and paid child caregiving. Thus, I am interested in your stories, your first hand experiences of the complexities and issues of being a mother and paid child caregiver. It is my belief that the work of mothering and child caregiving is valuable and complicated yet it is often invisible - unrecognized and not seen as important.

It is my hope that your participation in this study will give you the opportunity to talk about yourself as a mother and paid child caregiver and have this work validated and recognized as important. Your contribution will add depth to the body of information already known about mothers and child caregivers by providing stories of day to day experiences and discussion of what's important to you.

Procedure:

Open ended interviews will be scheduled individually with each participant to talk about her personal experiences as a mother and paid child caregiver. Interviews and discussions will be taped and then transcribed. Tape transcripts and a draft of a your story will be provided in writing to you and discussed. You will have an opportunity to review and make changes to these drafts and transcripts. Names and identifying details will be changed to ensure confidentiality. Your wishes to delete any information or segments will be

respected. Collaboration is an important part of this research and process is deemed to be as important as the end-product. On-going discussion with you is essential in this research.
I will work with transcripts to identify potential threads that run throughout your stories of mothering and caregiving and work with you to ensure that they reflect your experience. Discussion of threads will make reference to the literature where applicable as well as resonate, when relevant, with my personal experience as a mother.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be assured by making changes to protect identities by altering names and identifying details in all written work. Pseudonyms will be used in any discussions with thesis committee members or program advisor as well as in transcripts, presentations, articles or publications.

Tapes and written notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will not be made available to any other person without your express written consent. Tapes, transcripts and field notes will be kept for a year after thesis writing has been completed and will be erased or destroyed after that time.

In instances where the co-investigator's inclusion in the participant's story impacts on keeping a participant's identity confidential, this will be discussed with the participant and details will be changed to completely meet her need for confidentiality.

Time Commitment:

Total time commitment will vary from participant to participant however it is anticipated that there will need to be approximately a total of 6 - 10 hours over a two to three month period of time [initial interview (1-2 hours), transcript review and meeting (2-3 hours), story and theme collaboration (2-3 hours), final draft review and discussion (1-2 hours)]. This time commitment is approximate and can be negotiated with individual participants to meet their needs and the needs of the researcher.

Monetary Compensation:

This is no monetary compensation for participation in this research study.

Intended Use of Research:
Research will be used to complete requirements for a Masters in Human Ecology. This will involve related presentations, articles and the thesis itself.

Consent

I acknowledge that the research procedures described above, and of which I have a copy, have been explained to me, and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. In addition, I know that I may contact the people designated on this form, if I have any questions either now or in the future. I have been assured that personal records relating to this study will be kept confidential. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to myself.

The people who may be contacted about the research are:

Dr. Brenda Munro	Mary Lynne Matheson
phone number	phone number

____________________________ **(Name of Participant)**

____________________________ (Signature of Participant)

____________________________ **(Name of Witness)**

____________________________ (Signature of Witness)

__________________________Date

__________________________**(Signature of Principal Investigator)**

____________________________**(Signature of Co-Investigator)**